

The True Nature of
The Divine Law,
AND
Of *Disobedience* thereunto :
IN
Nine Discourses,
Tending to shew,
{ In the One, a *Loveliness* ; }
{ In the Other, a *Deformity*. }
By way of
DIALOGUE
BETWEEN
Theophilus and Eubulus.

By **SAMUEL DU-GARD**,
Sometime Fellow of *Trinity-Colledge* in *Oxon* ;
Now Rector of *Forton* in *Staffordshire*.

*Formam quidem ipsam, & tanquam faciem Honesti vides; quæ,
si oculis cerneretur, mirabiles amores excitaret Sapientiæ. Plato,
apud Cic. Offic. l. 1.*

*Quis est tam dissimilis homini, qui non moveatur offensione Tur-
pitudinis? Cic. de Fin. l. 5.*

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in *St. Paul's Church-yard*. MDCLXXXVII.

The True Nature of

The Difference

between

the Christian and the

Infidel

in the

Doctrine of

the Trinity

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To the Worshipful

Edwin Skrymsher

OF

AQUALATE

ESQUIRE.

S I R,

TH E Relation, which I
stand unto you in, ha-
ving been made Signal,
at the first, by your very great
Uprightness and Generosity,
and ever since, foster'd by your

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no less Love and Bounty, I have often wish'd I could add one more Ornament to it, by making it remarkable in its Gratitude. Could I thus do, that Fidelity, at least, and Incorruptness in Patronage, which is the more your Own, by being so little the Virtue of the Age, might, in hopes of like Success, be by Others in like manner Praised. But I am very sensible how far, in this respect, my Power is short of my Desires: And yet I need not be over-much concern'd that so it is; since a Conscionable Endeavour to discharge mine Office is by You esteemed the best Requital: And, in this, I trust, I shall
never

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never, to my Ability, be wanting. However, Sir, at the Persuasions of some, whose Judgment I much esteem, (if their Kindness to me hath not something bias'd it,) I have presumed to offer these Discourses, (such as they be,) as a publick Acknowledgment of your many Favours. I can say little for them, but that I meant them Piously ; and for their Subjects sake, I do not altogether Despair of their being accepted : Which, it may be, they the rather will be, because they are, in part, the effect of that Sacred Function, in which your free and unsought Munificence gave me the first Encouragements. Neither,

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by being your Peculiar, would I have them Unserviceable to the good of Others more at large ; of which , yourself both have been, are, and yet further will be, so Worthy an Instrument. It is too manifest, Sir, that the most do look upon the Divine Laws as a Task, and have a secret Grudging while they Obey them ; such as a Slave perceives under a Burden, which he bears with Discontent, and would fain throw off. I am therefore not unwilling to contribute that little which I can, to the Curing of this Malady ; by making out unto Men, that our *Saviours Commands* have in them what may strongly allure our Love ;

as

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as being the highest Accomplishment and Happiness of our Nature ; and thereupon should be desired and delighted in : And that the *Violation* of these Commands is a thing *Foul* and *Odi-ous* , as casting the greatest Stain and Deformity upon Men ; and should therefore be shunn'd and abhorr'd. I must confess, there may seem but little need of such Treatises as This ; because our Nation abounds with so many, and so very good ones ; and, I fear, their Number, with some, taketh away from their Value. But , considering that there is a Sphere, in which some Discourses will be more *Active* than others, though of greater Worth ;
and

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and that Acquaintance, Good Will and Curiosity, will sometimes bid *Take up and Read*, when otherwise the Book would have lain clos'd and untouch'd ; I could not tell, but it might be so with This. And I would hope, that the Favour which I have found in these parts, and Your Name prefixed, will, through Gods Blessing, make way for, and give a more kindly Operation unto, the ensuing Dialogue. And while the Age is, at the present, so hotly engaged in the Disputing and Controversial Way, possibly, Sir, *a quiet and peaceable Discourse*, of things that highly concern all, may be thought not Unreasonable ; whether,

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ther, as an Admonition to some, who, intent upon what they should *rightly Think*, are less mindful of what they should *religiously Do*; Or, as a Refreshment to others, who, weary of Contention, and Fearful of the Event, find their chief Rest in God, and his Righteous Laws. The Names which carry on this Dialogue have their Honours in Sacred VVrit; and do import by their Signification very VVorthy Persons. And such I was willing they should be; *THIS* a Lover of God; *THAT* a Pious and Good Instructor; that their Words might sway the more with myself, when I should think it was not I, but
They

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They, that Spake ; and that, with Others also, who should please to Read them, they might bear a greater Authority than from Me they could have had. And though, I doubt, they are much short of what they should be, yet the less Knowing, if Attentive, will find what they may be informed by ; and the more Understanding, if Religious, what they will not utterly dislike. But, Sir, whatever the following Sheets will be to Others, to yourself they are no more than a bare Signification of Respect ; seeing they can add little to your Knowledge, which is large and extensive ; and are not wanted by your Practice, which

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which few have the Heart to reach unto. It is, I know, more easie to You to Do worthy Actions, than pleasing to Hear of them, when done : But I cannot, in Gratitude, as I serve at the Altar, but, amongst many Others, take notice of One, viz. The Honorary Respect you have shew'd to the Church, in freely giving up your Improprate Tithes, as an Addition to her Maintenance. I hope it will be returned into your Bosom with large Advantage ; since, by those Few that have prevail'd with themselves to do the like, it hath been found a sure way for the being Blest. And if more, who have the Power, durst make the Expe-

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Experiment, I question not, but
They also would find it so to be.

That you may long Live,
and have an Increase of Happi-
ness with the Increase of your
Years, is the Prayer of,

Honoured SIR,

Your most Obliged

and Humble Servant,

SAMUEL DU-GARD.

The

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THE
TRUE NATURE
OF THE
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and are enforced upon the account that God
is Terrible. How these can consist with Love,
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Society, are those which are enjoyn'd by God.
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once; but when the Commandment came,
Sin revived, and he died. And how the
Mosaick Law is termed A Yoke, which
neither we nor our Fathers were able to
bear.

DISCOURSE *the First.*

THEOPHILUS.

I Have often thought, *Eubulus*, that one of the
greatest Pleasures of a Mans Life is to be
found there, where Two Faithful Friends
enjoy one another in Ingenuous and Profitable
Discourses: Communicating what they find to
have been most taking with themselves; and by
united Thoughts and Searches discussing some Truths,
which otherwise would not so well have been known.

EUBULUS.

I Suppose there are none whose Souls are any
whit refined, but will readily assent to what you
say, *Theophilus*. And I am persuaded that though
his Expression be very high, he yet spake with a
true

true Sense of Discursive Friendship, who said; *Cum una mehercule Ambulatiuncula, atque uno Sermone nostro, omnes fructus Provinciae non confero*, Cic. I prefer one Walk, and one Discourse of ours, before all the Honour and Income of my Province.

Theoph. What relish Honours and Incomes have with others, I know not, and am little solicitous to know: But sure I am, I seem to myself not to want them, while I have what I speak of; which, I see, is no less esteem'd by You also.

Eubul. The Converse of a Faithful Friend is never otherwise than pleasant to me: But then I judge it most to be valued, when by his Words I am made not only the *more knowing*, but the *better*: Having a sacred kind of Warmth raised within me, by which I am more enabled to *DO those Duties* which are incumbent on me, and to *SUFFER those Evils* which are so frequent in the World; and which I must not expect to be altogether freed from.

Theoph. I thank you for what you now say; because if I shall ask some such Discourses from you, (which I from the first have designed to do,) you cannot deny me. And I should account it a great Pleasure hereafter (when I possibly shall walk these Fields alone,) to remember, that under this Tree I learned such Knowledge; under that, was instructed in such a Virtue: Here, I discerned how little these outward Things are to be trusted in; There, how reasonable it is to submit to the Divine Will; and, in every place, that I both had, and rightly made use of, an Understanding and True Friend.

Eubul. You may be confident, I will not deny you any thing which shall tend to the promoting of such an Innocent and Virtuous Pleasure. And I the rather shall yield to you in what you desire, because I am sure it will be mine own, more than your, Advantage: Having sufficiently experienced, that many

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things well spoken by others, have been Hints to you of deeper Enquiries, and more grateful Discourses.

Theoph. If you have any such Opinion of my Freedom, (which I am indebted to my Friend if he will kindly accept of,) I will promise that you shall not complain as if it were less to you, than to others. And for a Proof hereof, I will take the boldness to propose the Matter to be discoursed of: Which, unless you shall think otherwise, shall be concerning *The True Nature of the Divine Laws*; which, as I conceive, doth consist, not meerly in the *Excellence which they have in Themselves*, but in *another Excellence also, viz. That Loveliness* (if I may be allow'd to use the word,) *which they carry in them in respect of us.*

Eubul. Your Conception of their Nature is no more than just; and a better Subject you cannot find out: Unto which I shall the more willingly speak what I can, because, if we may make a Judgment of those Laws from the usual Practice of Men, either there is not the *Loveliness*, you speak of, in them; or if there be, (as certainly in the highest manner there is,) it is very much slighted.

Theoph. 'Tis too true that so it is. And therefore I hope it will by *Him, who sees in secret*, be accounted as some Reverence and Respect shew'd unto them, if, when they are so little observed abroad, we shall endeavour to search into their Perfections in private: Especially, since for this End we shall do it, that our Love to them may be the greater. And truly, *Eubulus*, the Royal Psalmist's Expression of so great Love to the Divine Law gave the Occasion of my now mentioning this Subject. For, reading those words, *O how I love thy Law! It is my Meditation all the day*, methought I felt my Soul more than a little touched with them; They seem-
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ing to proceed from a more than ordinary Affection in that good King.

Eubul. I do not wonder it was so with *You*, who, I know, keep your Heart soft and tender; and thereby fitted for right Impressions from the Holy Scriptures. But your saying that those words *seemed* to proceed from a more than ordinary Affection, doth not reach the thing home. They not *seemed* only, but *really did* come from an Heart full of Love to God's Laws.

And indeed, *Theophilus*, I think it no hard matter to discern a true Passion from one that is so only in shew. This later will betray itself in something or other, which, by a Judicious Eye, will easily be perceived: While the other carrieth its Evidences along with it; and, without scruple, is presently owned as genuine and sincere.

And surely no true Affection can be more convincingly express'd than this King's was to the Divine Precepts. His saying, *O how I love thy Law!* is to me no less than if he had said, He could not declare how much he loved it. His Love to it was greater than what his Words could arise unto: It being only comprehensible to his Understanding, and the inward Sentiments of his Soul; yea, almost too big for his Heart to contain. Thus much yet he could say, (if that might any way shew forth the greatness of his Love,) *God's Law was his Meditation all the day*: His Thoughts were continually taken up in it.

Theoph. If I had question'd the greatness of the Psalmist's Love unto it, I assure you, *Eubulus*, I should not have been so much affected with his Words. For according to that Rule, *Si vis me flere, dolendum est Primum ipsi tibi*; A Passion would not over quickly be stirred up in me by him, who I should think was himself insensible.

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But that we may not mistake one another in our following Discourse, it will be requisite to know, what is here meant by the word *Law*; it being capable of more than one Signification. Pray, therefore, *Eubulus*, let me have your sense of it.

Eubul. By the *Law of God*, I presume every one understands the *Will of God*, which he in his *Word* hath declared: But then, because part only of that, which we now acknowledge to be the *Word of God* was then written, by the *Law* here is meant the *Law given by Moses*; and that part of it especially which is *Moral*: Although the *Judicial* for the *Justice* and *Prudence* of it; and the *Ceremonial* for its *Mysteriousness*, are not wholly to be excluded from the *Law* we speak of; nor yet *whatever else is contained in Holy Writ*.

Theoph. You rightly say, what the word *Law* imports as spoken by our Psalmist; God's Will being written, at that time, no further than as it made up the Jewish Oeconomy. As it hath been manifested since, it hath relation to Men in a far wider sense, wheresoever planted upon the Face of the Earth. Yea, even those *Laws of Moses*, which are retained in the Evangelical Dispensation, cease to bind as they were given by *Moses*, and are Obligatory now from another Lawgiver Jesus Christ. But yet, still they are to be acknowledged God's *Laws*; and we may even now use these words, *O how I love thy Law!* Therefore, *Eubulus*, I desire you will shew me these things.

1. *What the Inducements were to this so great Love in David, and other holy Men of old, to the Divine Laws.*
2. *What the Inducements are which we Christians have to love them,*

Eubul. I

Exord. I see, *Theophilus*, the greater share of Discourse must lie upon me; but you will have it so; and to my power I will obey you.

As to the Inducements, which David and other holy Men of old had to love the Divine Laws, they seem to me to arise partly from its pleasing God to give these Laws; and partly from the Excellency of the Laws themselves.

In relation to the former, I must confess that the Nature of Men seemeth necessarily to require, that Laws should be given unto them. For it would have been highly irrational on *Mens part* not to acknowledge Him as their Lord who gave them a Being; and it would be a very great Dishonour unto God, should we think that They, whom he had made a little lower than the Angels, should be left unregarded and lawless.

But yet when Men had fallen from their Obedience, and had in great measure sullied that Law which was imprest on their Natures, it was certainly a very great Favour, that God, in stead of throwing upon them deserved Punishments, should chuse a Numerous People to be his Peculiar; and should himself repair that Law, thus obliterated within, by writing it in Tables, that it might be discern'd by the Eye.

Consider, *Theophilus*, the Greatness of Him who gives this Law; how he needs not the Services of any Creature; and also the Ingratitude of Man, how he disobeyed the most righteous Law in Paradise; where all the Love and Observance, which possibly he could shew, would not have been too much. Consider this, I say, and the Law, if it carry but any favour along with it, may certainly, for the sake of Him who gave it, be justly esteemed and loved.

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Neither is the Time, wherein it pleased God to give these Laws, unworthy of our Notice. So much was the Welfare of Mankind esteemed to depend upon the Writing of Laws, that many Nations, in after Ages, contended for the Dignity of being the first Authors thereof. And *Greece* especially, among the Priviledges which she boasts to have held forth to the rest of the World, reckons this as one of the the chief. But the Honour of having the first Written Laws belongs to the Hebrews alone, in comparison of whom (as *Josephus* against *Apion* proveth,) the Grecian Legislators were but of yesterday; and this Honour is much heightened by God's owning the immediate Relation of a King unto them, while he wrote these Laws. Now the Benefit of Laws, and the Glory of having These given so early, and by such an Hand, being well understood, and rightly valued by our Psalmist, (who himself was a Ruler and a King,) might well engage his Love to them.

Theoph. I acknowledge the Inducement from God's thus giving the Law, to be a very fair one. Pray, *Eubulus*, go on to the other you mentioned, viz. The Excellency of the Laws themselves.

Eubulus. Take it in that pious King's own words, *Psal.* 19. *The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the Soul: The Testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the Simple. The Statuts of the Lord are righteous, rejoycing the Heart: The Commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightning the Eyes. The Fear of the Lord is clean, endaring for ever: The Judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether: More to be desired are they than Gold, yea than much fine Gold; sweeter also than Honey, and the Honey-Comb. Moreover, by them is thy Servant warned; and in keeping of them there is great reward.*

Theoph. This

Theoph. This is a very high Character indeed of those Laws; if there be (as I doubt not but there is,) Truth in the whole.

Eubul. There is Truth in every tittle; And this will appear if we shall look upon the Laws which require Duties to Him who is the Lawgiver; or to Those, from one to another, or to Themselves, whom these Laws are given unto.

Pray tell me, *Theophilus*, what would you in Right Reason, and according to a perfect Harmony of Things, have the Duties towards a Prince and Lawgiver to be?

Theoph. I would desire they should be Fear, Love, and Gratitude; and these shewn upon Grounds every way good. There being nothing more comely, than that Subjects should be with-held from offending, by Fear; moved to all Obedience, by Love; and excited to Acknowledgments of Benefits and Protection, by Gratitude. More than These I mention not; because to These all others, I suppose, may be reduced; and are, in effect, no other than Expressions of them.

Eubul. All these you shall find to be according to your Wish.

Your first Duty of Fear is in *Deut. 6. 13.* (as also in sundry places more,) *Thou shalt Fear the Lord thy God, and serve Him; and swear by his Name.* Their Fear is to be such as not to scare them from him, but they are to approach unto him, and to do him Service. And for the deciding of Controversies, and establishing of Truth, they are to use his Name solemnly in an Oath.

And a right good Ground there is for such a Fear, from the Power and Justice of God; such as can, and will, inflict Punishments on them when they wilfully transgress; and this to the utmost of their Deserts. The Destruction of the Old World for its Impiety;
The

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The Overwhelming of the *Egyptians* in the *Red Sea*; The Earths opening her Mouth, and swallowing up *Corah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram*; and numerous other Instances of the like Nature, were hereof Testimonies sufficient. So that this Law of Fearing God, as a Prince and Lawgiver, manifests itself to be built on a sure and lasting Foundation.

Your second Duty of Love is commanded *Dent. 6. 5. Thou shalt Love the Lord thy God, with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Strength.* It is not to be a faint, and an unconstant Love; but one that is strong, and will not fail: For the Loving of God with all the Heart, and Soul, and Strength, doth not only import the greatest vigour of Love, but the greatest duration of it also. It must not be towards him Now, and anon quite off him; but the greatest Length it must have, as well as the greatest Height.

And the strong Inducements to this Duty were well known from the Creation of the World, which in the greatest Goodness was effected; from the Continuance of God's Favour when Man had fallen; and from the manifold Loving Kindnesses which he had shewed to his People in general, and to Good Men in particular. And therefore this good King could burst forth in earnest Exhortations to others, *O Love the Lord, all ye his Saints, for the Lord preserveth the Faithful.*

For your third Duty, viz. *Gratitude*, which you would have to be shewed to a Lawgiver, are all those Injunctions and Incitements of Praising God, which are scattered almost every where in the Holy Scriptures: And no other Design had those Sacrifices which were unbloody, than that Men should with Thankfulness acknowledge God as Supream. 'Tis said, *Levit. 7. 12. If he offer it for a Thanksgiving; as much as to say, Thankfulness is to be offered unto God.* And

And what more prevailing Motive could there be for the Obeying this Precept, than that, whatever was possessed was of God's Bounty? It was He that gave unto the Israelites all that they look'd upon as their Wealth and Property: And therefore they were to honour the Lord with their Substance, and with the First-Fruits of their Increase. That is, They were in Gratitude to render back something of what he had bestowed upon them. Not that he needs any thing of that which Men can return unto him; but that their Thankfulness may be expressed in what manner they are able to do it.

And this their Gratitude might be the greater, in that God secured his Gifts unto them by his Laws; allotting to every Tribe its proper Portion; and distributing that Portion amongst the Heads of particular Families; That Discords at first might not hinder their Possessions; and that Avarice and Ambition might not afterwards break into them. For what was thus divided by Lot (the Disposal of which was wholly from God,) was not to be alienated to other Tribes, nor to other Families of the same Tribe. The Property of the Land remained firm; only the Use and Incomes of it might be sold for a season; which yet might at any time be redeemed; and if it were not redeemed, it necessarily reverted to the ancient Owners at the Year of Jubile. And hereupon Industry was encouraged, and Peace established; and they sate under their (in a most proper sense,) *Own Vines and Fig-trees, none making them afraid.*

Nay, God had not only bestowed upon the Seed of Jacob all that they enjoyed; but even They themselves were also wholly from Him. In Kindnesses from Men the Man is supposed to have a Being before: And that we are Men, and have an understanding Soul, is not properly the Gift of any Man

to us. But God hath (as I may so speak,) given us Ourselves as well as other things; and so our Gratitude to Him is to be so much higher than to others, by how much Life and Being are better than Possessions: Yea, by how much what we enjoy are more his Gifts unto us, than they can be the Gifts of any others. For the Propriety of them is for ever his; and his Providence will never part with the Guidance and Direction of them. And therefore though others should give them us, it is his Bounty through their Hands.

How then might Those in the Judaick State love the Laws, which have immediate Relation to God as a Lawgiver? How full of Reason are they? Is there not the greatest Beauty in them? Which, could it be discern'd by our outward Eyes, who is it could see and not love them? And surely what appears truly beautiful to the Eye of the Soul (*i. e.* to clear and deliberate Thoughts,) will call no less for love, but much more: Intellectual Beauty being much to be preferr'd before that which is Sensible.

And if I may once more Paraphrase this Expression of the Psalmist, *O how I love thy Law!* Methinks it implyeth thus much. Nothing in the World is there that shall hinder me from loving it. I prefer it before all other things, however esteemed they be by Men. Were it left to my choice, whether I would have any of these Laws repealed; or whether I would fear, love, and be grateful unto God or not, though no Punishments should be inflicted if I did not do it, there should not be one Law the less for my Duty towards my God and Lawgiver. Nor should any thing, how pleasant or advantageous soever it be, buy off my Observance of his Laws: So dear is their Practice, and so delightful their Speculation to me.

Theoph. I see and acknowledge the Excellence of these Laws, and do really think them worthy the high Character which this Royal Person gave; and the great Love which he expressed to them.

But, *Eubulus*, of those Laws, which in their Observance had relation to God immediately, *Some were such as might seem to have no real Goodness in them, but Cruelty rather.* E. G. The shedding so much Blood, of Men, in Circumcision; of Beasts, in Sacrifice. Others, though not Cruel, might yet seem to proceed (and are by many thought so to do,) from the Will of God as Supream, without any discernible Reason for their being enjoyn'd, and consequently without any Love to his Creatures: For what Love can be seen there, where no Reason can be assigned, why such and such things are commanded or forbidden? And who is it then that can love such Laws? Of this sort were those that forbade the wearing of Linnen and Woollen in the same Garment; The Ploughing with an Ox and an Ass together; And the use of such and such Creatures for Food; and others not unlike unto these.

And then further; *The Laws, that require Fear, are such as are enforced upon the account that God is Terrible;* And where so great Terribleness is at the bottom of these Laws, how could they be so much loved? For (as the Apostle saith,) *Perfect Love casteth out Fear:* And where Laws do require so much Fear, the Love to them must needs be the less.

Pray, *Eubulus*, tell me, *Are these to be excepted from our Psalmist's Love?* Or if not, how can it be truly said, he loved them?

Eubul. For the satisfying of you in these things; and first for your first Objection, (to wit, *That of those Laws which in their Observance had relation unto God immediately, some might seem to have no real Good-*
ness

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ness in them, but Cruelty rather; as the shedding so much Blood; of Men in Circumcision, and of Beasts in Sacrifice,) it will not, I suppose, be unmeet that these things be considered.

1. That the Law, which hath so much love here expressed to it, is (as I before hinted,) to be understood of the *Moral Law chiefly*. For this hath a real and intrinsick Goodness in it. It is just and good that God, as he is our God and Lawgiver, should be feared, loved, and have Gratitude shew'd to him.

2. As to those other Laws of Circumcision and Sacrifices, though, in themselves considered, they are not Morally good; yet, considered with relation to all the good things which God was pleased to bestow to the upright Observance of them; and with relation also to the more severe Commands which he justly might have laid upon Men; they have been *comparatively good*; i. e. they shewed forth the Favour and Kindness of God unto Men. And might they not then be loved for the far greater Severities that might have been enjoyn'd? and for the many and great Temporal Blessings, which Obedience to them had brought as its Reward? Surely they might.

3. The Significations and Effects, which these Laws had, were excellent.

Circumcision was Instituted by God as a *particular Mark*, by which the Jews were sealed to be his People. Thus Gen. 17. 11. it is called *The Token of the Covenant betwixt God and Them*; to the intent that He should be their God, and They his People. And this possibly (as a Learned Person observes,) might be the reason, why God would have this peculiar Mark or Sign to be impress'd upon them to their pain; and to be admitted and undergone with a kind of shamefacedness; viz. That Nature might
not

not seem to dictate it; nor meerly the Commands of Men to enjoin it; but that it might be owned to proceed from God; who by such an unthought-of Mark among Men, would seal that People unto himself. And though Circumcision, by some of the Seed of *Abraham*, (*Ishmael*, and *Esau*, and the Sons of *Ketura*,) was introduced into some other Nations afterward, yet this hindred not the true Stock of *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, and their Posterity, to be Marked for God's Peculiar. Insomuch, that, by way of reproach, they called the Nations round about them, the *Uncircumcised*; and were back again themselves, through Hatred and Derision, termed *Verpi*, *Curti*, and *Recutiti*, the *Circumcised*.

Neither was Circumcision destitute of something that might signifie Him to be holy and good from whom it came. It denoted a Purity and Cleanness to those who bore it. Therefore it is said *Deut. 30. 6. The Lord thy God will Circumcise thine Heart, and the Heart of thy Seed to Love the Lord thy God.* Of which import of the word, that Instance *Lev. 19. 23.* is an unquestionable proof: *When ye come into the Land, ye shall count the Fruit thereof as Uncircumcised. Three years shall it be as Uncircumcised unto you; it shall not be eaten of; but in the fourth year, all the Fruit thereof shall be Holy, to praise the Lord withal.*

And might it not also, *Theophilus*, highly commend Circumcision, that it was so appositely ordered by God for the continual bringing to their Memory the Promise which he made unto *Abraham*? Now, that Promise was concerning his Seed: Which Seed, in the chief Acceptation, is to be understood of Christ, who is therefore, in Holy Scripture, called the *Promised Seed*. Of this Promise Circumcision was a Seal; and might be justly thought to be made on That part of the Body; that, as oft as they did Circumcise

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circumcise their Children, they might be *put in Mind* of Him, who, as to the Flesh, was to come from the Loyns of *Abraham*.

Wherefore, though Circumcision, in itself considered, might seem to carry very little of Mercy and Goodness in it; but the contrary rather; yet, as it thus entitled them the Peculiar People of God; directed them to an internal Purity; and betokened That Seed, in which They and all the Nations on Earth should be blessed, it might justly have a great Expression of their Love.

Look we in the next place upon Sacrifices. I will not here enquire into their first Rise; whether Men began them of their own accord, and God afterward improved them unto Mysterious Ends: Or, whether they primarily sprung from a Divine Command, with immediate respect to those Ends. It is enough to our present purpose to say, That some of them, under *Moses*, did import a great *Friendship and Familiarity* from God unto Man; and the *keeping House*, as it were, with them on Earth. Thus the Altar was his Table; and what was offered thereon was as his Meat. And other things in the Tabernacle first, and afterwards in the Temple, betokened a Dwelling-House: As Spoons, Bowls, Covers, a Candlestick and its Lamps; and such-like.

Some other of these Sacrifices were, in many cases, *An Expiation for Sins against God*: And, by the Blood of the Beast thus slain, the Life of the Offender was spared. For the Law, according to the strictest Sanction, maketh Death the Punishment of even the least Disobedience; as that of *Deut. 27. 26.* doth shew. And this Blood of Bulls and Goats, was, by the Will and Mercy of the Lawgiver, so far a Real Expiation for these Sins, as that it did, in the Apostle's words, *Sanctifie to the purifying of the Flesh.*

But

But then yet further ; These Sacrifices were *Typical* also, and did prefigure the pretious Blood of Jesus Christ, which was to be a more Noble Expiation for the Sins of the World ; even those Sins, for which there were allowed no Sacrifices under the Law ; and this, not only to the purifying of the Flesh, but to the purging of the Conscience from Dead Works, to serve the Living God. And although we may think, that this was not understood generally by the Jews, who expected a *Messias* that should be a Glorious Prince upon Earth ; yet that it was, in great measure, understood by some more eminently Religious among them, and particularly by our Psalmist, who hath many Prophecies tending this way, and applied, by the Holy Ghost, in the New Testament, to this very thing, we have no reason to doubt. And so, though the shedding of Blood in Sacrifice might seem to have nothing of good in it, (and indeed God himself is said *not to delight in the Blood of Bullocks and Lambs* ; which he could not be said to do, had it any Essential Moral Goodness in it,) yet as these Sacrifices betokened God's Dwelling among them ; and by their being slain, the Lives of Men were spared ; and also his Blood presignified which should be shed for the Sins of the World, it might well have this Expression, *O, how I love thy Law !*

Neither let the shedding of Blood be Objected by any, as *a want of Mercy* in these Laws to those *Brutal Creatures*, whose Blood they required to be shed ; and disagreeing to that Title which in Holy Writ is given unto God ; to wit, *The Preserver of Beast as well as of Man*. There are, *Theophilus*, who, by all means, will have these Creatures to be meer *Machins*, altogether destitute of Sense. And, were it thus, there would, in reality, be no occasion to move any question concerning these Laws, in this respect.

respect. But till Men are convinced that Brutes are thus insensible, and that, notwithstanding all the signs of pain when they are wounded, there yet really is no pain to them, (which will never be generally believed; and none can be blamed if it be not,) this conceit will, in the present case, stand in no stead at all. Nay, the falseness of it, may, from what we but now said, be fully evidenced; viz. That the Blood of the Beast, as *being his Life*, was to go for the Life of the Offender, (there being no Remission without Blood, *which is the Life*,) and also, that thereby *the Death of Christ* was Typified; a Nobler Expiation than the *Death of Bulls and Goats*; neither of which could fairly be said, were there no real Death to the Beast.

But laying aside such an uncouth and extravagant Imagination, we may with Sobriety, and on good Grounds, affirm; That God, who made the Creatures, might, without infringing his Goodness, command what he pleased concerning them; for they were his Property. And if he indulged unto Men such variety of them to be slain for their Food, he might surely be allowed some sorts of them to be slain for his own Worship. Especially, since this way, through his infinite Goodness, they were more useful to Mans Welfare, than either while they were killed for Food, or kept alive for Service. In other cases God had taken care by his Laws for Mercy to be shew'd to them: And while they were slaughter'd for such excellent Ends, and made instrumental in the doing such signal Services both to the Glory of God, and the Good of Men, the pain they suffer'd laid a great Honour upon them, though they were below the Capacity of understanding it. Yea further; so far merciful were these Laws to these Creatures, that only the Blood of such was called for, as would otherwise possibly,
some

some time or other, have been killed for Mens use. And herein they were favourable to *Men* likewise; in that they required not such Sacrifices as, for rareness, should be far and wide sought after; nor such as by their fierceness might endanger those that caught them; But home-bred and quiet Oxen and Sheep; innocent, and not rare, Turtle-Doves and Pidgeons were those which God was pleased to order for Himself.

Theoph. You have taken away my Scruples as to those Laws which might seem to carry something of Cruelty in them: I desire you would do the like for me in relation to those Laws, which, though not Cruel, did seem to proceed from the Will of God as he is Supream; without any discernable Reason for their being enjoyn'd; and consequently without any Love to his Creatures: For Love is to be found only in those Laws, where good Reason can be given why such and such things are commanded or forbidden: And only those Laws are worthy to be loved by Men.

Eubul. But that He, *Theophilus*, who is infinitely Wise, did give Laws without Reason; and exerted his Will, as he was Supream, with no respect to his Wisdom, there is none, sure, can, with any shew of Reason or Wisdom, imagine. And though We, who are at such a distance from the Jewish Times, cannot presently find why God enjoyn'd such and such things, it will yet be rash to say, that those who lived near the Days when these Laws were given, were ignorant of the Reasons for which they were given.

If some of these Laws were made directly contrary to the vain Customs of the Neighbouring Nations, especially of the *Zabii*; and did secure the Israelites from the Superstitions and Idolatries which those were guilty of, it was a good Reason why

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they were enjoyn'd. And this seems to have been done, *Lev. 18. 2, 3. After the Doings of the Land of Egypt wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do; and after the Doings of the Land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do: Ye shall do MY Judgments, and keep MINE Ordinances;* to wit, as being flatly opposite to the Rites and Customs of *Egypt* and *Canaan*. And though some of those things were neither good nor ill in themselves; yet, either as they were used amiss by those Nations, or might open a Door to worse things in the Israelites, God, who had espoused this People to Himself as to an Husband, might take away all Occasions that might tempt them to Unfaithfulness towards him: And therefore gave these Laws unto them. Neither is it altogether improbable, that, in many of these Laws, there was a Myste-
 rious Sense, which among some other Reasons might have a place for one. For why might not Simplicity in Manners, and a Freedom from Mixtures in Religion, be signified by not ploughing with an Ox and an Ass together; and not wearing Wool-
 len and Linnen in the same Vesture? And in some of those Creatures prohibited for Food, why might there not be a Caution against those Human Vices which seemed to be Character'd in them? As Pus-
 sillanimity in the Hare; Filthiness in the Swine; Ig-
 norance in the Owl; Rapine in the Hawk, and such like. It doth not follow, because we cannot in-
 stance, in the like manner, in all the rest of those
 Creatures which are forbidden, that there is there-
 fore no Ground for such Reason in those we have
 mention'd. And though the People of the Jews were
 very dull and carnal, yet that they was so dull and
 carnal as not to discern such a meaning in the Pro-
 hibitions; and that therefore there were no such
 meaning in the Prohibitions, is something strange
 to assert.

Besides

Besides, God possibly might, in some of these Laws, not give a Reason, that they might the more surely be observed. For sometimes when the Reason of Laws is known, some Men are apt to think, that if they can obtain the End without keeping the Law, it is no matter if they break it. And this, one well represents in the Law of *Dent. 17. 17. He shall not multiply Wives, that his Heart turn not away*; But *Solomon* said, I will multiply Wives, and mine Heart shall not be turned away. But it is written afterwards, *That his Wives turn'd away his Heart*. God will not therefore, in some of his Laws, give an open Reason for their being enjoyn'd, because Men may thereby resign up their Understandings to Him, and not frustrate his Commands by ways of their own. And yet this may with Truth be said, That *Those Laws*, for which there is no particular Reason given, and which, in themselves considered, do include no real Goodness, God did, in great measure, order for the better promoting of Obedience in general to those Laws, which are in their own Nature truly good, and apparently include Reasons for their being observed. And this He did by *suting those subordinate Laws*, in many Things, to the Temper of that People, and the Times and Climate in which they lived: Who, had they not been continually enured to Obedience in these smaller things, would have been disobedient in those which were greater.

Yea, and some of these Laws of which no certain account can be given, might be fitted for their Temper another way also. It hath been noted, that as the Jews, and some other Eastern Nations, were more than ordinary inclined to the Leprosie, so the eating of Swines Flesh did much increase it. And if, in this Instance, God was their Physician as well as Lawgiver, by making their Religion instrumental

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strumental to their Health, it will not be unreasonable to think that, in some other things of the like Rank, he might be so too. In the Commands concerning the Disease but now mentioned, it may seem he was. For it is hard to give any other Reason why a Person, whose Flesh is cover'd all over with the Leprosie, should be pronounced clean, and another, who had any raw, or live-flesh not overspread with it, should be unclean, (*Levit. 13. 12.*) unless it were that the power of infection had ceased in the former, and did continue in the later.

I doubt not, *Theophilus*, but our Psalmist and holy Men under *Moses*, saw more things belonging to these Laws, than any now adays are able to instance in. But these may take off the force of what you urged against them, as to their want of Reasons, and, in that respect, as to their want of Excellencies.

Theoph. I willingly yield what indeed I cannot deny to these Laws: And desire you will deal by my last Objection as you have done by the foregoing ones.

Eubul. If I forget not, it was this: That the Precepts, which require Fear, are such as are enforced upon the account that God is Terrible; and where so great Terribleness is at the bottom of these Laws, the Love to them must needs be the less: For perfect Love casteth out Fear.

I must confess that God, in the Old Testament, did often manifest himself in such a manner as might throw a Terrour into Men: And even at the giving of the Law in Mount Sinai, there were Thundrings and Lightnings, and the Noise of the Trumpet, and the Mountain smoaking. All which might strike a Terrour; and did strike so great an one into the People, that they desired *Moses* to speak unto them, and they would bear; but should God speak unto them, they should die.

But

But though this were so, yet we may truly say, That God chose this way, by reason of the *inflexible Nature* of the People, whom more mild and gentle Methods would not so well have prevail'd upon. How often, in Scripture, are they called *A stiff-necked People*? And therefore they were to be *trained under the Law as under a School-master*; not being as yet fit for the highest things, but, as it were, in the lowest Form. Their Duty of Fearing God they are to be excited unto by Means that represented God Terrible, or they would not have feared him at all.

Hereupon those that knew the great Love of God to his People, (who, rather than *He* would lose *Them*, or *They* should cast *Him* off, would use the more severe Methods for the keeping them in their Duty, and the fitting them for his Favour,) might well love the Law that enjoyn'd the Fearing of God, and the way also that enforced it.

But yet the Methods which struck such Terrour, God was pleased to use only upon some special Occasions; and he often, if not always, intermixed with them Means which were more gentle; that this Fear might not be the Fear of a Slave or Captive to his Tyrant, but of a Subject to his Prince; who looks after those under him with Care and Love, though he sometimes injects a Dread into them by his Majesty. And this is very remarkable even in the giving of the Law, when, as we said, God manifested his Terrours. The Preface to the Decalogue remembers the Israelites of his great Kindnesses to them; *I am the Lord that brought thee out of the Land of Egypt, out of the House of Bondage*. And in the Second Commandment, his visiting the Iniquity of the Fathers upon the Children, unto the third and fourth Generation of those that hate him, is abundantly out-weigh'd

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weigh'd by *his shewing Mercy unto thousands in them that love him, and keep his Commandments.*

Some indeed there have been, who have not approved of any Prologue to be put before Laws, or any persuasives to be mingled with them; it being the part of a Lawgiver by Authority to Command, and not by arguments to persuade. But though God hath more Power than all other Lawgivers; and hath a Will infinitely more perfect than theirs; and consequently might give his Laws in the most peremptory manner; yet he was pleased to make way for them into the Hearts of his People, by Love as well as Fear; that as the careless might be affrighted, so the more ingenuous might be allured; and none kept back from Obedience, either by presumption or discouragement. I might instance in many places of Scripture pertinent hereunto; but I will do it only in two, where God is said to be Terrible. The former is in *Deut. 10. 17, 18. The Lord your God is God of Gods, and Lord of Lords, a Mighty and Terrible God;* But then the very next words are; *He doth execute the Judgment of the Fatherless and the Widow, and loveth the Stranger in giving him Food and Raiment.* The other place is in *Nehemiah, Chap. 1. 5. O Lord of Heaven, the great and TERRIBLE God, that keepeth COVENANT and MERCY to them that Love him, and observe his Commandments.* How is his Terribleness here mitigated, yea, set off, and made Lovely by his Goodness and Mercy? And what better Comment can we give of these Scriptures, (and many others not unlike them,) than that of *David, Psal. 130. 4. There is Mercy with Thee, that thou mayest be Feared.* Though there hath been a *Strong Wind* that rent the Mountains, and brake in pieces the Rocks; though an *Earthquake* there were, and after that a *Fire*, yet God was not so much in any of these; or, at least, delighted not so much to be in these, as in the *still small Voice.* And

And this, I think, may be sufficient for your Objection; and also for the Laws which require Duties to God as a Prince and Lawgiver. Better Laws, and better grounds for their observance, could not be wish'd; and so they might well be Loved.

Theoph. Pray, *Eubulus*, proceed to those Laws, which require Duties from Men, one to another. Which, I well remember, you would have to be considered in the next place, to those Laws which respected the Duties to God immediately.

Eubul. For the *wellfare of Society*, a Rational Man would desire, that there should be Honour and Respect shew'd unto Superiours, by those that are below them; and that there should not be oppression and ill nature towards Inferiours, from those that are above them; but that Righteousness and Kindness should be exercised unto all.

Now these excellent things are all strictly enjoyn'd by Gods Law.

The Duty of Honour and Respect to Superiours, the Fifth Command sufficiently requires. Honour thy Father and thy Mother; i. e. all those who being in Place or Authority above thee, are, in a larger Sense, Fathers and Mothers. And since Authority and Dignity were first seated in, and did arise from, that which was Paternal, I suppose that therefore Father and Mother are put for all Superiours.

And, under the Word Honour, are comprised all those Duties, which, in any Circumstances, are, in right Reason, to be shewn from meaner Persons to those that are above them; which Circumstances may, upon occasion, be better conceived, than here; at the present, discoursed of.

For Superiours not oppressing those who are Inferiour, by using their Power to the depriving them of what is theirs, the Tenth Commandment is, by a just consequence, a strong Law. They are therein

forbid

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forbid to Covet any thing ; much less then are they to take by force that which is their Neighbours ; and the meaner sort, surely, may bear the Name of Neighbour to those who are higher.

But there is an expresse Precept, *Levit. 25. 17. You shall not oppress one another ; no not a Stranger ; Chap. 22. 17. No nor a Servant that is escaped from an hard Master ; Deut. 23. 16. Nor shut thine Hand from him ; nor thine Eye against him, Chap. 15. 7. 9.*

Yea, Excellent Laws were made for good Deeds to be done unto them. *The Corners of the Field were not to be fully Reaped ; nor the Gleanings of the Vintage to be gathered, but left for them, Levit. 18. Whatsoever grew every Seventh year was not to be inned ; and a Release was also then to be made of all Debts, i. e. of all Debts owing by the Poor to the Rich. And lest a Man should, from the thoughts of this years Release, be the more strait-handed to his poor Brother, there is is a special caution given in this point, Deut. 15. Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked Heart, saying, the Seventh year, the year of Release is at hand, and thine Eye be evil against thy poor Brother, thou shalt surely give him.*

And, at the year of Jubile, (which was every Fiftieth year,) there was an Universal Freedom and Joy, every Man might return to his Possession ; and every Servant to his own Family. Yea, this year, as it expressed the greatest Mercy and Gladness when it came, so it stretched forth Righteousness and Mercy to all other the years. For thus it is, *Lev. 25. According to the number of years after the Jubile, thou shalt buy of thy Neighbour ; and according to the number of the Fruits he shall sell unto thee ; according to the multitude of years, thou shalt encrease the price thereof ; and according to the fewness of years, thou shalt diminish the price thereof ; ye shall not therefore oppress one another ; but thou shalt fear the Lord thy God.*

And

And then, in general, all Persons were upon occasion to shew Love and Kindnesses, and to have them shew'd back again to themselves. And by such Acts as these; as also by the abstaining from Adulteries, Thefts, False Testimonies, and such like ill Actions, Society was to be kept up, and Righteousness and Peace maintain'd.

It is, *Theophilus*, delightful to consider, how by Laws, even towards Beasts, Birds, and Trees, God minded his People of a kind and good deportment one towards another. *The Ewe and her Lamb were not to killed both in one day*, Levit 22. 28. Neither was *the Old Bird to be taken with her Eggs or Young*, but *in anywise to be let go; that it might be well with them*, Deut. 22. 6. Such seeming Cruelty must not be committed as to *seethe a Kid in its Mothers Milk*, Exod. 23. 19. And the *Fruit-Trees* (though in a Siege against an Enemy) *must not be cut down*, but spared; and this, out of a kind of Gratitude, because they bring forth for the Life of Man, Deut. 20. 19. So every way do these Laws tend to the planting of good Nature and sociable Virtues. And, surely, such Laws as these might well have the Expression of Love towards them. Consider, *Theophilus*, a Commonwealth well govern'd, (as That of the Jews was,) and all Happiness accruing unto it, (as to That there did,) and tell me, if those Laws be not worthy to be loved.

One Law indeed there was which the Jews afterwards complain'd of, as bringing them into great Straits and Troubles, viz. That which commanded *their Ground not to be Tilled*, and *their Increase not to be gathered by the Owners every seventh year*. For since Pecuniary Tributs were exacted of them, and their Field-increases were the Foundation of their Coin, they found themselves, when their Crops were not brought home, to be, in great measure, disabled for

for the answering such Taxations. And therefore when *Alexander* the Great at *Jerusalem*, had learnt out of *Daniel's* Propheſie that the *Persian* Empire ſhould be overthrown by a Man that was a *Greek*, and thereupon, as perſuaded that Himſelf was the Perſon, had bid the *Jews* ask of him ſome great Boon, they ſignified to him that a greater Privilege could not be granted them, than the being freed from the ſeventh years Tribute; which Requeſt they obtain'd of him.

But though this Law proved heavy to them, yet it was not from any defect in the Inſtitution, but from their Sins; By theſe they forfeited God's Favour, and gave him cauſe to turn that Law into their Punishment, which he firſt made for the exerciſe of Mercy among themſelves, and for the manifeſting of his own Power and Goodneſs towards them. For thus we find it, *Lev. 25. 20, 21, 22.* *If ye ſhall ſay, What ſhall we eat the ſeventh year? behold, we ſhall not ſow, nor gather in our increaſe; then I will command my Bleſſing upon you in the ſixth year, and it ſhall bring forth fruit for three years. And ye ſhall ſow the eighth year, and eat yet of old fruit the ninth year; until her fruits come in, ye ſhall eat of the old ſtore. If their Land fail'd of its Fertility, A fruitful Land was turn'd into Barrenneſs for the Wickedneſs of them that dwelt therein: According as it was expreſſly foretold, Lev. 26. 20. If you will not hearken unto me, your Land ſhall not yield her Increaſe, nor the Trees their Fruit.*

Hitherto of the Laws which reſpected the Jews from one another.

As to the Laws which related to *Themſelves* in their own Perſons, I will ſay only this, (and it is enough to ſhew an amiable Excellence in them,) viz. That they are ſuch as make a Man calm in his Breſt, and ſtrong in his Body. *Thou ſhalt love thy Neighbour*

thou as *thy self*, supposeth that a Man is to love Himself; and the Supposition is built upon, and is as valid as a Law: A more benign Law than which what Man *is it* can desire? He is hereby not to torture himself by Anxious Cares and Envious Thoughts. He is engaged likewise not to impair his Health by any manner of Excess; for, in doing either the one or the other, he would not be his own Friend, nor love himself. And this hath an excellent tendency to Friendship abroad also. He, who loves himself so well as not to envy others, will by others not be envied but loved. And He, who for his own Welfare will be temperate and sober, is rightly fitted for the being faithful, and for the having Trust reposed in him.

And thus, *Theophilus*, we have briefly run through these Laws. And if you consider them as to the *Moral part*, they naturally tend to the establishing of a People in Peace and Prosperity: And may therefore deservedly be loved. And if you consider them *altogether*, they had some things from *without*, that might preserve Mens Love towards them from growing Faint, *viz.* Gods especial promise of Earthly Rewards, and his immediate Protection. *If thou shalt hearken unto the Voice of the Lord, to observe and do all his Commandments, the Lord shall command the blessing upon thee in thy Store Houses, and in all that thou settest thy Hand unto: And he shall bless thee in the Land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. He shall give thee Rain in due season to multiply thy Corn, and thy Wine; so much that the Threshing shall reach unto the Vintage; and the Vintage reach unto the Ploughing; and thou shalt dwell safely in thy Land: And so signal was this safety which they enjoyed, that when, for the Worshipping of God, all the Males were frequently to repair to Jerusalem, though their Borders were left Naked, and defenceless, yet never*
did.

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did their Enemies take that opportunity either to invade, or any way molest them: According to that Word of *Exod. 34. 24.* *Neither shall any man desire thy Land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the Lord thy God thrice in the year.*

And lest their Love to these Laws should, from Earthly Prosperity, sink into Carelessness, (as worldly Blessings make oftentimes even that Obedience to be forgotten, for which they were sent as a Reward,) it was kept awake, and taught to be Reverential by some miraculous things which attended these Laws. Such were the *Urim* and the *Thummin* on the Breastplate of the High-Priest; which, when consulted by meet Persons, on weighty concerns, did by a wonderful power afford answers: *The Ark of the Testimony* from which Oracles were given by an audible Voice. *The Sacred Fire of the Altar*, which falling, as it were, like a Lion on the Sacrifices, presently consumed them. *The appearance of a Cloud* sometimes on the Tabernacle, and afterward on the Temple; to which we may add the *open and remarkable effects of Gods Power* manifest in Battles; and in particular Revenges from Heaven upon presumptuous Sinners. God would not have done so wondrously in relation to his Laws, had they not been of very high account with him, and this might well keep up Life and Vigour in Considering and Devout Mens Love towards them.

I have, *Theophilus*, in my speaking to these Laws, asked of you, what, in Right Reason, and according to a perfect Harmony of Things, you would have the Duties towards a Prince and Lawgiver to be. And I have ventured to say, that a Rational Man, for the Welfare of Society, would wish for such and such Laws. And this I think I might well do, without offering any injury to these Laws, by making Human Reason to be the Judge of them.

For

For they are rightly agreeable to our Nature, and the true Sentiments thereof. But though they are so, and by all must be acknowledg'd so to be, yet no Nation on Earth was so happy as to have them so established as the Jews had. Hereupon it is said, *Deut. 4. 6. Keep ye these Statutes, and do these Judgments, for this is your Wisdom and Understanding in the sight of the Nations, which shall bear all these Statutes, and say, Surely this great Nation is a Wise and Understanding People, for what Nation is there so great, which hath Statutes and Judgments so Righteous as all this Law which I set before you this Day?* And very observable it is, as to what I have been speaking, viz. That in times of Captivity, when the Laws of the Conquer'd are usually changed, if not wholly destroyed by the Conquerours, these Laws found such favour abroad, that they were never as to any part of them alter'd. And that the Jewish Nation lived to see the Periods of three noted Monarchies succeeding one another; and, in an uninterrupted Line, did itself continue still the same; flourishing and happy, unless when careless and disobedient; cannot be ascribed to any thing but the Excellency of these Laws, and Gods more than ordinary Blessing attending them.

All which things, *Theophilus*, being rightly weighed, may shew forth the *Madness* of *Marcion*, and some others of the Gnostick Crew, who impiously pronounced the *God of the Old Testament* to be an *Evil One*, *Morose* and *Cruel*, and of a different Nature quite from *him* to whom the *New Testament* belongeth. Although greater Love is display'd by *Christ* than under *Moses* could be discern'd, yet that the Old Law proceeded from a *Good God*, who was *Merciful and Gracious*, and who made those his Laws suitable to the Jewish Nation, and pertinently significant of better things to come, all certainly, who will be righteous and considerate in their Thoughts, must

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must needs confess with a Detestation and Abhorrence of such *Marcionitish* Blasphemy.

Theoph. But since all these Laws (whether relating to God or Men,) are so Excellent, and so Worthy to be Loved, Why doth St. *Paul* call them *the Ministration of Death*? 2 Cor. 3. 7. And why doth he say, *he was alive without the Law once; but when the Commandment came, Sin Revived and he Dyed*? Rom. 7. 9. as if he were the worse for the Law; and might date his Death from it. Why, lastly, doth S. *Peter* call the Mosaick Institution *a Yoke, which neither we nor our Fathers were able to bear*? Act. 15. 10.

Enbul. In answer to your first Scripture, wherein the Law is called *the Ministration of Death*; some understand it thus; not as if the Law brought no Privileges with it, or rather Death; but so, as that all the promises, which were made to the Obedience of the Law, were such as had relation *to this Life only*; and were all terminated in Death. And therefore, it is observed, that the Word *Life*, in all the Books of *Moses*, is never taken otherwise then for this Temporal Life: And all the rewards are mention'd only under the Name of Temporal Blessings, as may be seen in *Deut.* 28. and other places. Not (saith a Worthy Man of our own,) but that Eternal Rewards were in good measure Revealed to some Excellent Persons of Old; and the frequenter afterwards as the coming of Christ drew nearer; but these Revelations though vouchsafed by God, under the Law, did not properly belong to the Law; and, in strictness of Speaking, were not of it. It might therefore be well called *the Ministration of Death*, in case the Rewards belonging unto it had thus an end, and did cease in Death.

However the Law might justly have this Appellation, because, (as I before mentioned,) in the primary Sanction of it, *Death* was the Punishment of Disobe-

Disobedience. *Cursed is every one, that continueth not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them.* And though God was pleased to mitigate this Severity, in allowing Sacrifices to be an Expiation for some Sins, yet the great Transgressions of the Law, how repentant soever the Committers might be, found no such favour. Only lesser Offences, and such as proceeded from Imprudence rather than Design, were those for which Sacrifices were indulg'd: Whilst, *the Souls that did ought presumptuously, whether Strangers, or born in the Land, were to be cut off from among the People*, Numb. 15. 30, 31. Which (as it may seem,) made David himself afterwards (with respect to his Adultery and Murther,) to say, *Thou desirest not Sacrifice, else would I give it*, Psal. 51. There not being any Sacrifices provided for such Sins. And hereupon the Law is called *The Ministration of Death*; when yet to those that were Obedient, the Priviledges it gave were many; and so, for those, as for the Excellency, which, in itself, it had, might be loved.

That other Scripture, to wit, *I was alive without the Law once; but when the Commandment came Sin revived, and I died*: We (if we take it as spoken in the Person of the Apostle, and not rather, by a Figure, for others,) are not so to understand it, as if he were the worse for the Law, and might date his Death from it; But thus, While he look'd upon himself, and his own Actions, without a due Examination of them, according to the exactness of the Law, he might think himself to be in very good plight, and free from danger. But when he compared his Actions and Performances with the exceeding Accurateness of the Law, the Actions, which before look'd well, appear'd sinful; and he saw his Danger and Demerits to be very great.

D

Where-

Whereas *the Law in itself was holy ; and the Commandment holy, and just, and good,* and so, for its own worth, might be loved.

Your last Scripture is this; *viz. That the Mo-
saick Law is termed A Yoke, which neither We nor
our Fathers were able to bear.*

To this it may be replied ; That we are not to take these words in a strict sense, as if the Apostles and Jews could not bear that Yoke, but thus, They could not bear it without difficulty. For we know that they had born it, for many Generations, from the time of *Moses* to that day.

Besides, Neither was it a Yoke absolutely consider'd. For God, in the giving of these Laws, did (as a great Man interprets it,) *Τεταποφορεῖν, Acts 13. 18.* bear with some of their Manners,* which the use of those Times had taught them ; and made his Sanctions suitable, in many things, to their being *under-age*, as it were, and too weak, as yet, for more perfect Institutions.

But it is therefore term'd *A Yoke*, with reference to that Freedom, and those very great Priviledges which are brought unto us by Christ. In Comparison of These, it is little better than a Bondage : When yet before, it was a great *Honour* to the Jews ; and such as *They* only had a share in : The Heathens, as they were Heathens, having nothing to do in it.

You have, *Theophilus*, what at present I think may be replied to the Scriptures you brought. Yourself could, possibly, to your own Satisfaction, better have answered them : But if you are any way pleased with what I have said, and can reap though but the least of that Spiritual Advantage, you, in the beginning of our Discourse, spake of, I shall be the less solicitous for the excusing of my Failures.

DISCOURSE the Second.

The Contents.

THE Inducements that Christians have to Love the Divine Law. Love was the moving cause of our Lords becoming our Lawgiver. The Greatness of our Lawgivers Person. All the troublesome Ceremonies of the Old Law are done away by the Laws of our Lord ; and this, not by his Will alone, but by the admirable manifestation of his Goodness and Wisdom. How the Jews urging the Everlastingness of their Law is from hence answered ; and how their way of Speaking is Corrected, when they say our Lawgiver hath vilified and destroy'd their Laws. Only such Laws are enjoyn'd by our Lord, as have in them an Intrinsic Goodness, or else are for Ends absolutely Good ; and such as are discernable by every one. Though the Jews had some Inferiour Laws suted to their Temper and Climate, which did the better fit them for the observance of those Laws which were Moral, yet we have not the less reason to Love the Laws of our Lord because they are all Good, without any mixture of such Inferiour Laws.

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Laws, which may be agreeable to different Climates where Christians Live, and which may promote the Precepts of our Lord, are not by those Precepts excluded. Christian Laws are such also as will, in our Obedience, much comply with our particular Way and Temper. The Moral Laws which were given to the Jews, are by our Lord more fully and clearly given. The Laws that respect ourselves are properly belonging to the New Testament: At least, are there only directly and openly injoy'n'd. The Objection answer'd, that so far is the Christian Law from being more clearly given, that it requires us to admit of some things relating to Faith, which no one living can conceive how they should be. The Reasonableness of making our Understandings to yield to our Faith.

T H E O P H I L U S.

I Am very glad, *Eubulus*, I have once more your good Company ; and from the privacy of the place, the calmness of the Weather, and the leisure you at present have, you will, I hope, go on, where Yesterday you left off: For I have a great desire to hear the *Inducements, which Christians have to Love the Divine Law.*

E U B U L U S.

YOur desire shall be complied with ; not because I think I can so much inform you ; but because those things, which we already know, are made more
Active

Active upon us when we hear they are the Sentiments of others, as well as our own.

Theoph. You will make whatever Truths, after this manner, shall be quickned in me, to belong to yourself; as being Watered, at least, if not Planted by you. Besides, since the things that lie only in our thoughts do not usually so much affect us, as they do when we bring them out into Words, it is to be imagined, that yourself will not be wholly destitute of benefit, while you are kind unto me.

Eubul. Well then, with Prayers that it may be for the Ghostly Health of us both, we will proceed.

The *Inducements*, that Christians have for the Loving the Divine Law, (which are far greater than what the Jews had,) may, I presume, be collected from the consideration of these things, viz. The Lawgiver; The Laws themselves, and those Motives which are annexed unto them, for the securing of our Obedience.

As to what concerns the Lawgiver; it may very much contribute to the Love of the Christian Law, That Love was the moving Cause of his becoming our Lawgiver.

The Punishment which Mankind, for the breach of the Command in Paradise, was from Gods Justice to suffer, the Son of God was willing, in our Nature, to undergo himself. And though God the Father, if he had so pleased might have refus'd that any should bear the Punishment, besides those who had deserv'd it, (for the Law, when it is Transgress'd, doth require that the Offenders should suffer in their own Persons, *The Soul that Sinneth it shall dye,*) yet he was pleased to accept of his Son in our stead. Accounting the Reverence of his Laws, which, by the Sins of Mankind had been Violated, to be sufficiently maintain'd by his Death. But on this condition only would God accept of his Son to dye in our Room, that the Works of the Devil should be destroy'd

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stroy'd in us; and that we (as was but meet for us to do,) should endeavour after Holiness of Life.

The Son of God therefore, that *He* might be our Propitiation, and that *We* might not be altogether unfit to whom so great Favours should be shewn, cometh into the World to establish and promote Sobriety, Righteousness, and Godliness among Men. It pitied him to see those, whom he had Created in such an Eminent Rank of Beings, to wander in Darkness; unable by all their Reasonings to find out those things that nearest concern'd them; and recommending, upon uncertain grounds, those that, in some faint measures, they did discern. He hereupon reduceth them into right Paths; giving them a true sight of their wretched Estate; prescribing an Exact Rule to live by; and settling it on a strong and sure Foundation: Not only as agreeable to Mans Reason, which, though sometimes right, is often dim and erroneous; but as futeable to the Goodness of God, which is absolutely perfect; as being the Dictate of his Wisdom, which cannot be deceived; The resolution of his Will, which is most Holy; the Injunction of his Authority, which is most unquestionable; and the only way to a true and lasting Happiness. Whence it is easie to discern, that in infinite Love he gives his Laws unto us. And the same Love, from which these Laws proceeded, did in an eminent manner confirm them, and testifie their being Divine. When he gave them, he ascended into a Mount; and therein there was indeed some agreeableness betwixt the giving of the Law by *Moses*, and by Him. But this Mount did not burn with Fire; nor had it Blackness, and Darkness, and Tempest, as the other had, to keep the People at a distance from him. Neither were his Miracles of the severer kind; as those of Old, for the most part, were. He, by an Almighty Power, restored several to Life; but none ever suffered Death by him.

He

He gave Health to more than a few; (for from him *the Blind received their sight, the Lame walked, the Lepers were cleansed,*) but he never hurt the Bodies of any, that it might well be said, *He went about doing good.* But such a sweet-natured Establishment of his Laws we the less may wonder at, as being no more than what might well be expected, when such infinite and unspeakable Love had brought him into the World to give Laws. A very great Inducement sure, for us to love those Laws which were bottom'd on such a tender Affection to Mankind.

Theoph. It is pity, that any should be willing to overthrow this so great Love in him who is our Lawgiver, by saying, that it cannot consist with the Divine Justice to punish an Innocent Person in the place of the Guilty: That by an Act of Dominion God laid *Affliction* upon our Lord, but no *Punishment*: That therefore Christ was not a Propitiation for our Sins; and consequently, that there is no such Love, as we talk of, at the bottom of these Laws.

Eubul. It is sad, *Theophilus*, that any should oppose a Truth so evident, and advantageous. For is it possible, that any thing should be more plainly spoken in Holy Writ, than that Christ *suffered for our Sins, the Just for the Unjust*? That he came to give his Life a *Ransom for many*? That he is the *Propitiation for our Sins*; and that in due time he *Died for the Ungodly*? And can any thing be more manifest, than that our Lords dying in our stead was from his own Will? and was the act of one who had a Power to do what he did; and of one who could not sink under the Punishment, and also an act which is conducive to the best Ends in the World, the illustrating of the infinite *Justice* of God in *punishing Sin*; of his infinite *Mercy* in *saving Sinners*; and of his *unspeakable Wisdom* in doing it in such a way, which the Contrivances of Men and An-

gels could never have reached unto ? And since God's Dominion is so much pleaded in this matter for the avoiding the Name of Punishment, and making it to be only Affliction, we may pertinently ask, Why by *his Dominion* he might not *Punish* an Innocent Person offering himself in the place of the Offenders, as well as throw *Afflictions* upon him, as great and acute as Punishment itself could be ? And what difference is there to the Persons Sense who thus suffereth, betwixt Afflictions and Punishments ? Surely, These Men are very ill Asserters of the Divine Justice, who, while they deny that God may punish the Innocent instead of the Guilty, though from such admirable Motives but now mentioned, dare, at the same time, make him to have laid the Torments of the Cross upon his beloved Son, without respect to any offence or fault in the least. Which, how unworthy a thought of God is it ? And how little are they Friends to the Sacred Laws, who thus deprive them of their great Ornament, the wonderful Love in which they were founded !

Theoph. But leaving these Men (how Rational soever they would be thought,) *cum ratione sua insanire*, if you have any thing more to say of this our Lawgiver, pray, *Eubulus*, do it.

Eubul. This, I think, I may say truly ; That the Old *Mosaick* Law, and the Blessings accruing to the Jews thereby, were very much upon the Account of, and in order unto, our Lawgivers Coming into the World. And whosoever, thoroughly instructed in Christianity, will look into the Jewish State, and the Laws and Customs of it, will without much difficulty find, that they were, for the most part, Types and Representations of him who was to come. And they did betoken, either the Excellency of his Person, or the Purity and Holiness of his Laws, or the Way how he would be a Ransom for us, or the blessed

bleſſed Liberty we ſhould have under his Govern-
ment; ſomthing or other relating unto him was
ſignified by them, as might eaſily be ſhewed from
their Priethood, Sacrifices, Waſhings, Jubiles;
from the Land to which they were brought; from
the Perſon that brought them; from the Ci-
ties of Refuge, and ſuch like. VVhich things do
ſhew forth the Greatneſs of our Lawgiver,
(though, while on Earth He, for moſt Gracious
Ends, was, in appearance, mean.) For what Man,
ever before Him, was ſo Honour'd as to have the
State and Government of a great Nation, for ſo long
a time, to be formed as a Prophecy of Him? And
though Greatneſs, as ſuch, is rather fitted to ſtrike
a Reverence than to allure Affections, yet it may
allure them, when Maieſty and Love are equally
mingled; and when our Lawgiver is Primarily, not
more ſo by his Greatneſs, than by his Tenderneſs to-
wards Men.

The Apoſtle therefore to magnifie the Goſpel
and the Laws thereof, ſpeaks of them as given and
declared by the *Son of God*; God, ſaith he, *who at
ſundry times, and in divers manners, ſpake in time paſt
unto our Fathers by the Prophets, hath, in theſe laſt
days, ſpoken unto us by his SON, whom he hath ap-
pointed Heir of all things; by whom he made the Hea-
vens, Heb. 1. 1, 2.* As much as to ſay, He hath
ſpoken to us in a more Eminent manner than ever yet
he hath done unto any. And Chap. 2. he gives Pre-
cedency to his Laws before the Law given on Mount
Sinai, upon the Account that *THAT* was ſpoken by
Angels, *THESE* by the Lord. And by how much
the greater the Perſon is that ſpeaks, ſuppoſing the
things he ſpeaks are in themſelves Good, (as we
ſhall ſhew that His abſolutely are,) by ſo much the
more ſhould the things ſpoken have our Obſervance
and Eſteem. *This is my beloved Son, hear ye Him,*
ſaid

said the Voice out of the Cloud at the Transfiguration; when our Lawgiver did far exceed *Moses* in the *Brightness of his Face*; and had *Moses* himself, with *Elias*, Attendants upon him. He it is, that hath the note of Excellence by *S. John*, Chap. 1. 18. viz. *Who is in the Bosom of his Father.* i. e. Who, as nearest unto him, knows his mind most of any; Above All, he is to be heard. He alone is the Man, in whom, saith God, *I am well pleased*, ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα, in whom I fully rest; having made known my Will unto him, so as that a further notice of it is not to be expected; for to my full satisfaction, it is by him declared unto Mankind.

Such considerations of our Lawgiver may well excite our esteem of his Laws; and we have great reason to Love them for the Givers Sake: Since never any Laws were so much Honour'd, from *Love* and *Greatness*, as these were.

Toeoph. The things, which you have said, are of no mean Concern; and I wish, that they were entertain'd abroad with such a Sense, as they ought to be: Good *Eubulus*, proceed to the consideration of the Laws themselves.

Eubul. I will; and surely they well deserve our Love in these four respects.

1. In that all those Troublesom Ceremonies of the Old Law are done away; and that, in so excellent a manner.

2. In that only such Laws are enjoyned as have in them an intrinsick Goodness; or else are for Ends absolutely good; and such as are discernable by every one.

3. In that those Moral Laws which were given to the Jews, are by our Lord more fully and clearly given.

4. In that from these Laws we have a fair way for a pardon of all Sins.

1. In that all those Troublesom Ceremonies of the Old Law are done away; and that, in so excellent a manner.

The Eighth Day doth not now shew us the Blood of our Children; nor give us an occasion to pity them, from the pains they endured, by a Knife or sharp Stone. And how great these Pains were, and what the Soreness, may be collected from the Story of the *Shechemites*, whom *Simeon* and *Levi* were able to slay, Two Men, a whole City. Those Numerous Washings, which, upon the Touching of Unclean Things, (and those Unclean Things so many,) were to be performed, are now at an end. There is now no being polluted for many Days, or, until the Evening, separated from the Company of others; neither need we for every Sin of Ignorance go with a Goat unto the Temple for Sacrifice: Which how many must they have been, since too apt we are unawares to fall into Sin? Yea, a Period is put to all those Sacrifices, which were continually offered up.

These things had indeed good Reasons (as hath been said,) for their being enjoyn'd to the Jews. But it must be confessed that, as to their Number and Nature, they were tedious and burdensom. There was something in the whole Oeconomy itself, that (in the Apostles word, *Heb. 8. 7.*) was not ἀμειπτον, free from blame. And though it serv'd well for a time, yet Men, in after-Ages, when their Understandings were adult, and their Reason improved, were capable of better things than such ἀδυνάμει καὶ πτωχεύοντα στοιχεῖα, as *St. Paul* termeth them, weak and beggerly Elements.

Now, had God done them, or the more uneasy part of them, away, by his Will only, without any visible Effects of his Wisdom in their being abolish'd, it would have been a great Favour unto us.

But

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But that they All should cease, by *being improved into greater Excellencies*: That Circumcision, as it mark'd the Jews for Gods People, should be at an end, by *all the Kingdoms of the World becoming the Kingdoms of the Lord*: That, as it imported Purity and Chastness, it should be raised into the Spiritual Circumcision of the Heart, and the daily cutting off (as it were,) all impure and corrupt Affections: That as it was a sign of the Promised Seed, it should end in His Wonderfully being Born, who is the Everlasting Perfection of it: That so many Allusions and Sprinklings should terminate in the inward Cleanness of the Soul and Conscience; so as that there should be no further need of such things to denote it: That extraordinary Sacrifices should be finished by the Lamb of God's offering up himself once for all; appeasing, by his pretious Blood, his Fathers Wrath; satisfying his Justice, and purging away our Sins: That ordinary Sacrifices should be no more, through our Bodies and Souls being presented daily unto God a *Living Sacrifice*, an *holy, acceptable, and rational Service*: That all those Ceremonies, *Theophilus*, should in so admirable a manner be cancell'd, is an high Demonstration of Gods Wisdom, and the greatest Expression of his Love to us. And therefore his Laws, so excellently freed from such Troublesom Rites, may very much engage our Love.

Theoph. What you say, as it may much engage our Love to the Christian Law, so, methinks, it affords a good Answer to the Jews, who urge that their Laws are, in Holy Writ, styled *Everlasting*, and *Ordinances for ever*; and so cannot be thought to cease so long as the World stands. And it also may correct their way of speaking, when they say our Lord hath vilified and destroyed those their Laws.

Eubul. Pray

Eubal. Pray go on, and shew how in both.

Theoph. Some Things being said to be Everlasting and for ever, denoteth only their Duration so long till their Nature cannot extend them to a further length. Thus *Isai.* 34. 10. The *Fire* is said to *burn for ever*, which shall not be quenched before it hath consumed all the Matter in which it burneth. So likewise *Deut.* 15. 17. A *Servant* is said to be a *Servant for ever*; i. e. So long as till the Year of Jubile should free him: Before that time he must not think to leave his Master.

And not impertinent to what we are now speaking, was their way of dividing the World into Two Ages; The one before the *Messias*, the other after. The former they called *one for ever*, *εις τον αιωνα*, in *Seculum*; The later added to it, was *for ever and ever*, *εις τες αιωνας*, in *Secula Seculorum*.

Now, the Law as given by *Moses* was Everlasting as the word *Everlasting* may import a Duration so long as the Nature thereof would well allow of, so long as till the *great Jubile* should be; (for so themselves style the *Advent* of the *Messias*, from *Isai.* 62. 2, 3.) And an Ordinance for ever it was, as *for ever* had relation to the First Age of the World: But was not to endure beyond what the Nature thereof would well permit: Not *for ever and ever*, as taking in the Age of the World under the *Messias*.

And truly we may, in a manner, say, that the Law is not Vilified and Destroy'd by our Lord, any more, than a House is, when, from being rough and imperfect, it is finished with the greatest Wisdom, and Adorned with the most Rich Materials; Christianity being the *Judaick Religion* Heightned and Spiritualiz'd.

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Our Lawgiver himself saith, *He came not to Destroy the Law and the Prophets*: And his mentioning the Prophets together with the Law, seemeth unto me to be a good explication of what I am now Speaking.

We do not, nor can we think, that, when Divine Prophecies are come to pass, they are vilified and destroy'd: Rather, say we, that they are compleated; and that the Compleating them is the Honour and Crown of them.

If then our Lord hath not destroy'd, but by his Coming made good those Prophecies which were of him; Why should it be said that he hath Destroyed the Ceremonial Law, rather than Fulfilled it? Especially, when That Law was, in great measure, as a Type and Prophecie of Him.

It is not indeed any more to be so observed as to be reduced in Practice; because He, whom it did Prefigure hath been Present, and Lived among Us; just as the expectation of a Prophecie ceaseth when what was Predicted is come to pass: But then it hath its use still, as also the fulfilled Prophecie have; and we are to look both upon the one and the other, with a great deal of Reverence and Respect, As the Coming of our Blessed Lawgiver, and the Purity, and Spiritualness of his Government, have Crowned and Compleated Them; so They do now stand as faithful and evident Witnesses of the Truth of his Coming, and of the perfection of his Laws.

Eubul. You have well improved what I said; and were a Jew not obstinate in his hatred to our Lord, he could not but be sway'd by such considerations.

Theoph. But let not me hinder you from Speaking to the Second thing; to wit; *That such and only such Laws are enjoyn'd by our Lawgiver, as have in them an intrinsick Goodness; or else are for Ends absolutely Good; and such as are discernable by every one.*

Eubul.

Eubul. You hindred me not. To this therefore we say, That the Laws, which relate unto God, are all of a Refined Nature; requiring that his Worship be performed in Spirit and in Truth; and are such as shew forth his Spiritualness, his Purity, his Omniscience; and other his Glorious Attributes.

While we are Commanded to approach unto him with our Hearts, and to have them clean, and uncorrupt before him, the Law hath an *inward goodness* in it, in that it requires us to *be Holy, as he, whom we serve, is Holy*. And it nourisheth in us right apprehensions of God; that his Nature is not *Gross and Bodily*; but that he is present with us, and is a discernor of our thoughts.

A thing which could not be said of some of those actions, which in *Moses's* Law had Relation to Gods immediate Service. For wherein could the Spirituality of Gods Nature be inferred from the Blood of Beasts, and their Flesh being offered up unto him? How, could we from these Rites, in themselves consider'd, be instructed in the Holiness, Goodness, and Mercy of God? These Acts of Worship might seem to be of a Carnal and Gross Nature; and though there be places enough, in the Old Testament, that speak forth God to be a Spiritual and Immaterial Being; to be Holy and Good; yet from these parts of his Service, look'd upon in themselves alone, Men could not learn so much.

Theoph. But, **Eubulus**, there are *Two Precepts* of Christianity, respecting Gods immediate Service, which may seem not to have any thing of internal Goodness in them; and those are the *Dipping or Sprinkling of Children with Water in Baptism*; and the *Eating of Bread and Drinking of Wine in the Sacrament of the Lords Supper*: For what Affinity doth there appear between true Goodness and the Eating a Bit of Bread, and Sipping a little Wine?
Between

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Between true Goodness and the Sprinkling a little Water?

Eubul. I deny, not *Theophilus*, what you say; but then you must Remember the whole that was said; *viz.* That only such Laws are enjoyn'd, which have an intrinſick Goodness in them; or else are for Ends absolutely Good; and such as are discernable by every one.

By *Baptism* we are initiated into the Church of Christ, becoming Members to him our Head; and have the guilt of Sin wash'd away; *Baptism being instituted for the Remission of Sins; Acts 2. 38.* And we are also thereby made *partakers of the benefits of Christs Death*, into which we are Baptized, *Rom. 3. 6.* In which Rite, our Lawgiver (as in every thing he exceeded what was done before,) hath amplified his Seal, by making it applicable to both Sexes, when in Circumcision it was impressed only upon one.

Thus also, the *Eating of Bread and Drinking of Wine*, in the Holy Sacrament, are done in *Remembrance of the Death and Passion of our Lord*. And this Remembrance of him is upon the Account that he hath laid down his Life for Mankind, and for ourselves in that Number. And so, as oft as we do this Worthily, and as we ought to do, we are afresh entituled to that Salvation which by his Death he hath purchased for us; and have God the Father Reconciled unto us.

Now these are excellent Ends; and that to these Ends both Baptism and the Lords Supper were instituted, we are expressly told in Holy Writ, without any Clouds and Darknes; without so much as a word that may have a double or doubtful signification; that whoever runs may read.

Which cannot be said of Sacrifices, and some other Significant Rites, among the Jews; For although they were Types of our Lord (as hath been said,)

said,) yet they were not known so to be, by the generality of the People.

And truly, it doth not a little Commend the Precepts of Baptism and the Lords Supper, that, in these great Acts of our Faith, our Lawgiver is so far pleased to *condescend to our Senses* as to make the things that may be *Seen and Tasted*, to be the *Conveighers* of such inestimable Favours.

Water, and *Bread*, and *Wine* are indeed things of ordinary use: But, in so being, they import these Divine Priviledges to belong not to the Rich only, and the Great, but to the Meaner Sort also. And very rightly fited they are to the ends for which they were instituted. The Washing away of Sins is well signified by the Cleansing of our Bodies with Water; And Christs Wounded Body and Spilled Blood are better represented by the lowly Elements of Bread broken, and Wine poured out, than by more costly and rich Materials they would have been. For we are to Remember him not as in a pompous and splendid, but in an humble and afflicted Condition. Though mean, as a Bit of Bread and Sip of Wine may seem; yet very apposite it is, that our Spiritual Food, by which we are nourished up unto Eternal Life, should be conveighed to us in That which gives Nourishment unto, and supports our Temporal Life in this World.

So that all those Precepts, which, in their observance, have an *immediate Relation unto Gods Service*, are such as are *Intrinsically Good*; or else such, as may be *ranked with those that are*, for the *admirable Ends* which, 'tis plainly shew'd, they are ordain'd unto.

And further yet, *Theophilus*, Those Precepts which, *throughout our whole Conversation*, look towards God, are such as are worthy to be practised by *understanding Creatures*, towards the most perfect

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of Beings. And it would not be just to conceive a God in the World, who hath deserved infinitely well of Man, and not conceive such obedience to be due unto him. Such is the Believing and Trusting in him; the submitting our Wills unto his; and the Doing all things to his Glory, and such like. For by these He is own'd to be a God of Truth and Wisdom; a God of Power and Goodness; and to be All in all, the Great and Holy One. And surely Those Laws cannot but be in themselves truly Good, which so fashion the *Hearts* of Men, that they appositely shall answer to those *perfections* which are in God; and thereby (as far as Man's Nature is capable,) become partakers of them.

And how genuine a pleasure is it for a Soul thus to believe in Him, who cannot be Deceived himself, and who will not Deceive us! Who hath Revealed Truths which have been hid from Ages: Truths, that include the greatest Wonder and also the greatest Love! And were it not a Command that so we should do, what would we be more Solicitous for, or what more seek after, than the Priviledge of *Reposing Trust* in one who never faileth those, that with a Christian confidence rely upon him? When we are, as of ourselves, unable to see those things which shall be for our good; and very forward to look to those things that will be for our hurt, it sure is a Righteous Command that requires our *Wills* to be Subordinate unto *His*, whose perfection it is to will only those things which are best. And since the designs of Men so often create them trouble; and nothing, that here they enjoy, can give them true satisfaction, what can be a more noble End to all the Actions of Men, than that which is the End, the Almighty proposeth unto himself; and which gives him Eternal delight in the obtaining it, viz. *His Glory*? If, as all our powers and faculties proceed from him, we shall

shall, in all things, improve them unto him, there will be no cause for us to complain, that they are lost to Ourselves, by being found in Him. But we shall be filled with that Glory, which we do so Administer unto.

And, lest the Goodness, which these Laws have in them, should be injured by an undue Practice, they are to be obey'd in Righteousness, and no otherwise. Gods Glory is to be our continual Aim, but we must not go about to promote it by a Lye, or, any thing that is Evil. The keeping of our Souls is to be committed unto God; but it must be in Well-doing. And the like is there for all others Laws; which both sheweth, and establisheth, their Goodness.

Neither are those Laws, which more nearly respect Men of a different Make from the other; we, by these, are enjoyn'd the Exercise of Righteousness, Mercy, and Kindness. And what would a Man wish should by others be Practis'd to himself, and his Friend dear as himself, sooner than these? These do not, from any thing we possess, wring out the Tears of the Orphans and Widow. No Stone is there to cry out of the Wall, nor Beam to answer it out of the Timber. We by them are taught to rejoyce at the Welfare of others, as if it were the Fruit of our Prayers: To esteem the Blessings, which we ourselves do enjoy, to be the greater, because thereby we are enabled to do the more good. By them also a Taste Relish is preserved in our Meats and Drinks; and they are made to hold out Health and Long Life unto us, by freeing us from those Surfeits and Excesses, which would turn the most pleasant and wholsom things into Bitterness and Poison. In a Word, these Laws (how many, or of what sort soever they be,) are such as perfect our Natures, and capacitate us for a better World when this is done: For, a Man, without the Practise of these, would be altogether as far from

E 2 reach.

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reaching to the Glory of a Saint, as a Beast is from being improved into the Excellencies of a Man. And (*Theophitus*) *say* (which is not to be forgotten,) have nothing of dark Ceremony annexed, to be observed with the same Care as we do the substance of the Duties themselves. Wherefore, upon these accounts also, we have very great Inducements to Love the Divine Laws.

Theoph. I can easily grant, that, from the Intrinsic Goodness of these Laws, there is a very strong inducement to Love them; But is it, *Eubul.*, so great an one, that these Laws which have an Intrinsic Goodness should Alone be enjoyn'd? I therefore ask this, because, I remember, you said, that the *same* some inferiour Laws to the Temper of the Jewish Nation, did the better fit that People for the observance of those Laws which were in their own Nature Moral.

Eubul. It is a very great Inducement to our Love, that those Laws alone should be enjoyned, which have an Intrinsic Goodness in them. For now, as our whole Duty is reasonable, so we have it in a little room; and may the better understand, and do it; which would not so well be done, by reason of the vast Number of Laws, if all People, wheresoever scatter'd, should have had some suited to their Dispositions, which are so Various.

The giving of the Christian Laws, and of the Mo-
saick, was very different. Those by Moses, were only, or chiefly, to the Jews. God having then his Tabernacle in Salem, and his dwelling place in Zion, and among *Theophilus*, of all the Inhabitants of the Earth, He chose to place his Name,

And, over and above, as he was then God, so (as was before said,) at the giving of these Laws, he was their Temporal Prince. And therefore the Nation obiding one People, he might the better use some Laws to their Temper. Which indeed, Wisdom he did;

in the Judicial Law apparently; and not less in the Ceremonial making That which did so much Typify the future Kingdom of the Messias, to fit also the Constitution of their Climate; which enclined them much to a Variety of Rites, and a Ceremonious way of Worship.

Yet not so did God fore his Laws to their Tempers, as, in every thing, to Close with them. But, he, in a manner, did cultivate that People; keeping them in Action by the Number and Diversity of Laws; and bringing them under, as it were, by Curbs and Bridles; whereas, otherwise, they would have been extravagant, and more than they were (though that enough,) a Stiff-necked People. Thus were the Laws in many things suited to their Tempers, not to Satisfy but Govern them.

But now, the Christian Laws are given, not to one Nation alone, but to the whole World; whether Greek or Jew, Barbarian, or Scythian, Bond or Free. And therefore, it cannot be expected, that Laws should be fitted to every Nation and Climate, any otherwise, than as they are agreeable to the Nature and Souls of Men, who are willing rightly to discern things, and to act accordingly. And what multiplicity of Ceremonies and outward Restraints in *Juda* did the more Rational Considerations and Spiritual Motives are now, in the wide World, to effect.

But yet those Laws, which may be agreeable to the different Situations where Christians Live, and which may promote the better observation of those Excellent Precepts of our Lawgiver, are not to be excluded. Yea, God, since he hath ceas'd to exercise a Theocracy on Earth, hath left a Power in the Hand of his Church for the constituting such Rites and Ceremonies as shall fulfil the Apostle's Rule, *Let all things be done decently, and in order.* And

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since our Affections are apt to languish, where our senses are no way exercised, it will be but requisite for her to exert that Power and Prudence, which God hath endowed her with, in appointing such outward Gestures, and other seemly Usages, as may meetly establish a Decency in our worship, and be instrumental to the raising of our Hearts Heavenwards. And, I may say, God hath allowed this unto his Church, as *something Correspondent* to his own Power in the Jewish State, of appointing Religious Rites for the better carrying on of his more Sacred Service.

And then, for Civil Magistrates, he hath vested them also with a Power of making Laws, and therein of using or refusing the Judicial Law of Moses, or any part of it, so far forth as it shall be more or less useful to the Weal Publick, and the securing those Duties both to God and Men, which the Sacred Precepts do Command. Which Laws of Princes, their respective Subjects are, by the Divine Law, enjoined Conscionably to obey.

Now these, whether Ecclesiastical, or Civil Constitutions, may be varied according as the Climate and Disposition of Nations do vary. And thereby the number of Sacred Laws is the less, and their observance the more facile and certain; and the Honour also of Governours is the firmer established, in their being made so Instrumental for the Good of Society, wherever they bear rule.

Theoph. You'll pardon me, *Esther*, that, by interposing sometimes, I delay your progress. Though truly I have little reason to repent of my Fault, since, in the things I doubt of, you set me on better ground than, for ought I know, I am, in many things, which I seem to be more sure of. The Divine Law may well claim our Love, not only in that they are all truly Good, and very suitable to Human Nature,

ture, but also in that they, having none other of a Lower rank mixed with them, are the more surely and easily known; and do likewise afford so good a Scope for Governours to *Signalize their Prudence* in constituting such Laws, which, not unagreeable to the Law of God, shall be most agreeable to the Temper of those who are under them.

Enbul. As they do allow the *exercise of Prudence to Governours*, so do they also to *private Men*, in Ten Thousand actions of their Lives, which are not commanded nor forbidden by the Law of God; That, following their own Inclinations, and doing as shall seem to them best, they may have the greater content and satisfaction therefrom,

This, in our *private actions*, is that Liberty which by our Lawgiver is indulged us; and is usually termed *Christian Liberty*. As our Actions have relation to the *publick*, and are Subject to the Laws of Superiours, it is *Christian Liberty to have a power of obeying those Superiours in what they Command*, (how various soever their Commands are,) whether in a different, or in the same Nation; so far forth as they shall not be *contrary to the Divine Laws*. And this may be called *Christian Liberty* in opposition to the *Mosaick straitness*; which required the Jews, and all who should be *Proselyted* unto them, to practise those Laws, whether *Ritual* or *Civil*, and none other to the omission of those.

And though some of those were not to be exercised out of the Land of *Judea*, where their Temple stood; and so, were forborn of old by the Jews in *Babylon*, and, at this day, are not observed by them in their dispersions up and down the World; yet it was, and is, esteemed their *Calamity*, thus to be hindered by distance of place from the use of them.

And one thing more there is, *Theophilus*, (which I take to be of no mean Concern,) That the *Chri-*

frarian Laws, though they be all futable to our Natures, as we are Men, yet are fuch alfo, as, in our obedience, will *much comply with our particular Way and Temper*. If we are of difpofition inclining to Sadnefs and Melancholy, they will allow us to be moft Con- verfant in the Duties of Mortification; of Fearing God; of Sorrowing for Sin; of Renouncing the World and the Vanities thereof. If we are of Temper more Lively and Cheerful; the more Cheerful Duties, of Rejoycing in Gods Mercies, of Praifing him in his Works, of doing him Service in publick Juftice, and other Virtues Instrumental to the welfare of Society, will be permitted unto us. And our Lawgiver (fo Gracious is he,) will accept us, in either of thefe ways; and account his other Laws not to be difobeyed, though they be not fo frequently drawn out into Practice.

Whence, the Christian Laws, although in the Body of them they have none, that are made for the particular Tempers of Nations, as the Jewish Law had for theirs, do yet, in all thefe ways, allow a Compliance with Temper and Conftitutions; and may well be very much Loved upon this account; but cannot, in any Reafon, be found fault with, as if they did not allow any fuch thing.

Theoph. I thank you for what you have faid; as being instructed well, and not a little cheer'd from your difcourfe: But will fay no more; becaufe I long for the Third thing which renders the Christian Law Worthy to be Loved;

Viz. That thofe Moral Laws which were given to the Jews, are by our Lawgiver more Fully and Clearly given.

Eubul. Since you are fo defirous of it, I will not keep you in Sufpenfe.

As deliver'd by Chrift, their Scope and Intent is more plainly discern'd. He hath vindicated them from

from the ill Interpretation of the Pharisees; and hath placed their Dignity and Excellence, not in the Outward Observance alone, which the Jews did chiefly aim at, but in the Heart especially, without which External Performances are little worth. And therefore, in the beginning of his Sermon upon the Mount, He endeavours rightly to instruct the Heart and Soul, by acquainting those who are his Followers, That *They are blessed who are poor in Spirit; who are meek; who hunger and thirst after righteousness; who are pure in Heart; &c.* Which Expressions denote, that the Mind should be rightly framed; and that They, who give up their Names unto him, must have their Souls brought into order, and adorned.

He tells them, that *They are the Salt of the Earth*, and will be good for nothing unless they endeavour to season others by their exemplary Conversation. *Matth. 5. 13. They are the Light of the World*, and so they must shine before others, that their good Works may be seen, and God glorified. *V. 16.* He extends the Commandment of doing no Murder, even to the not being angry with another without a cause. *V. 22.* The Precept of not committing Adultery, he makes reach even to the forbidding of Lustful Looks and Desires. *V. 28.* He forbids all Divorces, unless in the case of Fornication. *V. 32.* He restored Marriage to its Primitive Perfection by prohibiting Polygamy, *Matth. 19. 5. They Two shall be one Flesh*, Emphatically, *They Two*, as exclusive of more, which we learn from *V. 9.* of the same Chapter, *Whoever shall put away his Wife except it be for Fornication, and shall marry another, committeth Adultery.* For, how weak would it have been to pronounce it Adultery for a Man to marry after a Divorce, if the adding one Wife to another before a Divorce should be no Adultery? And if it shall be said, that our
Lord

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Lord orders it as a punishment to him, who puts away his Wife, not to marry another; but permits those to marry more than one, who put away none; it may be replied, That surely the Punishment might little be feared, because it might be so easily avoided. For who need care, whether he married or not, after the putting away a Wife, if he might marry as many as he would before? And we cannot think that He, who is the Wisdom of God, should ground any Law upon so sandy a Foundation. He disallows of *Swearing*, how true soever, in ordinary Conversation, *Verf. 34.* He prohibits all *Revenge*, in that we are not to resist an Adversary so, as to pay an Injury for an Injury, *V. 39.* He commands *Love* to be shewed even to *Enemies*, *Blessings* to be given to those that curse us, *V. 44.* And truly this Command, and the foregoing one, may seem to be added by our Saviour as not having the Law of Nature for its Foundation, according to which the Decalogue was framed; but being built upon that Love which our Saviour afterwards did shew, when he died for his Enemies. For the Law of Nature may seem to allow of this, *Us ne cui quis noceat, nisi laceffitus injuriâ*, Cic. But, when injured, he may requite it. *When we do Alms*, we must not have respect unto our own Glory, but only to the Glory of God, and the Good of the Miserable. *Chap. 6. V. 1.* *When we Pray and Fast*, both must be done with a devout secrecy, that God in both may be chiefly looked unto, and the Eye of Men not cared for, *V. 16.* We are commanded, while on Earth, to have our Hearts in Heaven; *To lay up Treasures* there, by laying them out here, in Charitable and Virtuous Deeds, *V. 19.* We are forbid to be anxiously concern'd for any things of this World, though never so necessary; but are, with a devout submission, to depend upon God,

God, and to lay all our cares upon him. V. 23. We are commanded not to judge others, nor to be Censorious towards them; but are to think no evil of them; to put the best Interpretation upon their Actions, and to look with a strict Eye upon ourselves only. Chap. 7. 1, 2. Yea, in all our behaviour towards others, to observe that excellent Rule of doing to Them whatsoever we would that They should do unto us. What Precepts can there be more full and clear than these are? Can the Decalogue be better interpreted than by them? Is there not in them a more perfect and spiritual Sense, than can be presently discern'd in the Old Law? If, as David saith, *Thy Law is pure, therefore thy Servant loveth it*; what Heights of Love must the purity of these Laws raise up in us? More largely, and clearer by far, are our Duties towards God, and our Neighbours, here delivered; far more Reason then have we to love them.

If we consider the Law which immediately respect a man's self, we shall find, that they are much more fully given unto us, than under the Old Law they were.

It hath been observ'd by some, that in Moses's Law, strictly consider'd, there are no Precepts so be found that immediately respect a Man's self. And it may seem to be so far true, viz. That there are hardly any there, but what are included in, and deducible from those, that primarily look another way. And therefore, if we will rightly consider things, the Laws that respect ourselves are more properly belonging to the New Testament; at least, are there more directly and openly enjoyn'd; Such are the Precepts, *If our Right Hand offend us, to cut it off; If our Right Eye, to pluck it out*. Such also are other Precepts tending towards Mortification; The preserving not only our Bodies free from Intemperance,

rance, but the keeping them under, that we may be pure and clean, both in Body and Soul. The bearing of Afflictions and Injuries with a patient and quiet Spirit, and others not unlike unto these.

Whoever shall look into the Laws given us as we are Christians, must needs confess, whether they respect God, our Neighbour, or ourselves, that they are, at least, much more fully and clearly given than before they were: If yet *some* of the greatest purity and Excellence be *not added*; and so we have a great Enducement, on this Consideration also, to Love them.

Theoph. By this their Clearness, Fulness, and Perfection, they are fitted for the greatest extension of our Faculties, and the most Heroick Endeavours both of our Souls and Bodies. Yea, could we rise to the highest pitch of Virtue that Mortality is capable of, we should find room in them, for even yet Nobler Attainments; and those, such as would require our still pressing forwards, till the last Moment of our Lives. Whence, how answerable are they to that Sacred Infinity which is in God! To whom we can at no time say, *All these things have we done, what lack we yet?* What Humility may they not nourish in us, whose Perfection we still fall short of! What Care and Watchfulness that our Obedience may be approved! What Prayers to God that his Goodness may help us in our Perseverance; and his Mercy pardon us in our Failures!

But yet, *Eubulus*, I wish that what you have said were owned by all, as a Truth. Some there are (whose Auditor I much against my will have been) who have said these following things, which are direct objections against your Discourse.

Viz. That so far is the Christian Law from being more clearly given, that it requires us to admit of some things relating to Faith, that no one Living can conceive how they should be. And so our understandings, which are the sole Judges of other things, are so far from being relied on here, that they must be wholly laid aside.

2. Granting that the Precepts of Christianity are very full, and enjoyn'd to a greater Spirituality than in Older Time, yet the Severities of them are unreasonable to us, as we are Men; reducing us to such streights, as cannot be gone through without a great deal of uneasiness, if at all. And though there be none who will not commend a pure Air, yet if it be so pure as not to be breathed in without much difficulty, there is no reason it should be over Delighted in and Loved.

Enbul. I know there are some, who, in good earnest, dare thus urge against the Laws of our Lord; but they are Men of corrupt minds; and by their ill Lives are sway'd to talk after this manner; lest they should appear to have Opinions any whit better than their Practice. A shame it is, that any in a Christian Common-wealth, where Christianity affords so many outward benefits to them, should, without severe punishment, be permitted to speak against the Laws of Christ. But when such a vile Liberty is so much usurped, it will be but meet, with Truth, to defend these Laws. And I will (with your leave,) endeavour to do it the more largely, that I myself may have the more in readiness, what to reply, upon occasion, to this sort of Men.

Theoph. Be that your design then, so that I share with you in the benefit.

Enbul. In answer therefore, to their first Objection, (*viz.* That so far is the Christian Law from being more clearly given, that it requires us to admit of some things.

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things relating unto Faith, that no one Living can conceive how they should be. And so, our understandings, which are the sole Judges of other things, are so far from being relied on here, that they must be wholly laid aside,) we say;

That however the matter of our Faith is beyond our reach, yet the Precept of believing is plain; and and what our Faith is to be, we are very clearly instructed in Holy Writ.

And what absurdity will it be, if, at the thoughts of some Mysteries, (the Son of God being Conceived by the Holy Ghost and Born of a Virgin, and such like,) we cease with that Blessed Virgin to enquire, *How these things can be?* and make our Understandings yield to our Faith; as She did, when she quietly rested with no more than those Words, *Behold the Handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy Word.* And wherein will it misbecome us, if, in the thoughts of the Hypostatick Union of the Infinite and Eternal God with our Frail and Mortal Nature, we cry with St. Paul, & Babel, *O the Depth of the Riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God! How are his ways past our finding out!* This is not to throw away our Understandings; but only to reduce them to the Obedience of Faith; which will be their perfection.

The Gospel, *Theophilus*, doth teach us the Obedience of the whole Man; All the Members of the Body are to become the Members of Christ, by being conformed to his Laws; and also all the faculties of the Soul are to own his Sovereignty.

The Will is to be pliant and ready to what he enjoins; and the Affections are to be regulated into the being Holy and Obedient. And do we think that the Understanding is to be lawless, and yield no Obedience? But what Obedience can it shew other than a Submission to the Boundless, and Inconceivable Wisdom

dom and Knowledge of God, confessing that itself is weak and dimighted in Comparison thereof?

Certainly it is but meet to think, that God is a Being, which is far above our Conceptions; and that he can do what our understandings cannot measure; and so it is not un-becoming us to acknowledge some things in Christ as the Objects of our Faith, which yet our Understandings cannot fathom. For our Blessed Lord is, in the greatest height, *the Wisdom of his Father*; So, as that the Holy Angels *ἐκθυσμένον παραύλει*, do only desire, with a Reverential stooping, to look into these things, as being fit for Admiration, and beyond their Knowledge; and therefore they may well surpass the most acute and largest Conceptions of Men.

There is indeed a very great Room for Reason in our Holy Religion; which claims admittance into the Hearts of Men, by Arguments as great and strong, as any considering Man would desire: There being no rational grounds to think, that the Evangelists and Apostles did publish Falshoods in their Writings; but the greatest reason for our belief, that what they have Written is True and Divine.

But then, when by Reason we have admitted of the Truth and Divinity of the Scriptures, we are not to imagin, that we can comprehend every particular thing therein contain'd, with the same Understanding by which we conceive the Truth of the Scriptures in general. And yet the same Reason, by which we admit of the Truth of the Holy Scriptures in general, doth prove very fully the Truth of all Particulars therein contain'd, though we cannot understand them.

Yea, yet further; Every, even the most difficult Mystery there, gives us so much the use of our Reason and Understanding, as to think that it is but *Reasonable*, the Chief of the Ways and Methods

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thods of God (for such the Nature of our Lord, his Conception, Life, Death, and Resurrection, are) *should be above our weak Capacities.* Which may shew, methinks, very well, the *Arrogance* of some Men, who, to make the Law of Faith the more easie, would bring all the Mysteries of the Gospel down to the Level of Human Conceptions: And the *Profaneness* of others, who would make the Height of these Mysteries to be the Disparagement and Blemish of the Holy Laws: Or, in a Word, who will not Believe the one, that they may not Practise the other.

I would not compare these great Mysteries with small things: But yet to these Men I may say, that every thing in Nature which they look upon, and know that it is, if I should ask them how it comes to be so, they must confess that they are Ignorant of it. How comes a little un-colour'd Moisture in the same Turf to be formed into Herbs of different Qualities and Shapes? That it is so, they see plainly; but the *How* of it (if I may so speak,) they understand not. And it would be a Madness to deny, that there are such Herbs, because they cannot conceive how they came to be so.

And is it not a strange piece of Obstinacy, That when these Men are baffled in Ten thousand things, which they see, before their Eyes, to have a real Being, they will deny these spiritual Mysteries, meerly because they cannot comprehend how they should be; when yet they have the greatest Arguments to convince them that they are? May not God exceed their Understandings in things relating to Heaven, as much as in things belonging unto Earth? And if the things *which are seen* are, in great measure, in *the Dark* to them, shall they contradict those things which *are not seen*, meerly because they cannot equal them with their Thoughts? Because Christ is not *περαχλισμένος* Anatomiz'd, (as
it

it were,) *Naked, and open unto Men*, as Men are unto Him, shall they therefore have no *Faith in him*?

But, as I said before; Although the Things we are to believe are high, (who can thoroughly know them?) yet the Law that bids us believe is Clear and Intelligible: And it may very well deserve our Love, because there are none of these Mysteries, which we are to believe, but what our Wellfare and Happiness are Founded in; and what are instrumental to the Birth and Exercise of those excellent Virtues, which the other Laws of our Lord do enjoyn: Yea, so far as they are Revealed unto us, they are to be Rested in, not Pryed into. And we shall not think amiss, if we persuade ourselves, they shall hereafter be more fully manifested unto us, as a Reward of the Obedience of our Understandings here.

You'l excuse me, *Theophilus*, that I have been so long on this Answer; though truly, I could not well help it, since the Objection (or rather Objectors,) seem'd to require it.

Theoph. You shall have your pardon on one Condition, that you will be guilty of the like fault in Answering the next.

Eubul. It is very likely I may. However I shall not be over Solicitous; because I have my pardon before Hand.

But it begins to be late. Every thing is bending Homewards, and minds us of what we likewise are to do. The next Evening will, I hope, allow us that Hour, which this denies us.

DISCOURSE the Third.

The Contents.

THE Severities of the Christian Laws are not unreasonable; neither do they reduce us to such straits, as cannot be gone through without a great deal of uneasiness, if at all. The Design of our Lord is not to beat down our Natural Inclinations and Appetites, but to rectifie them. Our Dispositions, if well managed, not averse from a right Improvement. The Laws of Christ do not dash the pleasure of Conversation, by threatening idle Words with the Day of Judgment. The Loving of Enemies, while they persist to be injurious, is in itself not unmeet, but highly equitable, in case the History of our Redemption be true. Fasting and Abstinence not unreasonable; nor the parting with Estates and Lives for the asserting of the Gospel. From the Laws of Christ we have a fair way for the Pardon of all Sins. What the Law of Faith require of us. How much it is different from the Old Law. What the Law of Repentance is. Too many make Faith and Repentance to stand in opposition

opposition to the other Laws of our Lord. How the Laws being done away, which was Engraven on Stones, is to be understood. Repentance for Sin, cannot without the greatest Absurdity be wrested to the further and more safe committing of Sin. The Examples of the Thief on the Cross, and of the Labourers in the Vineyard at the Eleventh Hour, consider'd. None of the Divine Laws unsuitable to one another. These Laws of themselves are grievous unto none. As they have relation only to Civil Society, and the welfare of Men in this World, they do far surpass those of the most noted Lawgivers, They by no means do favour the Opinion, that Right of Possession is Founded in Grace. And that it is Lawful to resist Sovereign Princes in the Maintenance of True Religion. They make the Man truly beautiful within.

E V B U L U S.

After that store of Visitants, in whose obliging Conversation, your Afternoon, I hear, hath been spent; I had thought, *Theophilus*, that your Evening Retirement would have been forgot, if not wholly hindered; and I began to be content, that my Walk must, to Night, be lonely.

T H E O P H I L U S.

NO, *Eubalus*, I did not intend to leave you so ; you see I am at liberty ; and though I am much Delighted with the Company of Temperate and Ingenious Friends, (as these to Day were,) yet I could not forget, when they were gone, that *Eubalus* would be here. I am, I confess, much taken with that pleasantness ; which ariseth from a number of good Friends together ; but I more enjoy myself with One alone ; if that One be like my *Eubalus*. The Other smooth my Forehead into Smiles ; This, I will say, doth me good at Heart.

And therefore permit me without further Ceremony, to put you in Mind of what will be so Grateful unto me. *Viz.* Your vindicating of the Divine Laws against those who say,

That granting the Precepts of Christianity are very full, and enjoyn'd to a greater Spirituality than in olden Time, yet the Severities of them are unreasonable to Us, as we are Men, reducing us to such Straights, as cannot be gone through without a great deal of Uneasiness, if at all. And though there be (you say,) none who will not commend a pure Air, yet if it be so thin and pure as not to be breath'd in without much difficulty, there is no Reason it should be over-delighted in and loved.

Eubul. With Acknowledgments of your kind Expressions to me, which I wish I could deserve, but am very sensible I do not, I would, in reference to the Objection of these Men, know, what those Severities, those Straights are, which they mean as unreasonable ; so should we the more clearly answer them.

Theoph. I remember I heard these things particularly mentioned by them : *Viz.*

That the Laws of Christ beat down those Inclinations and Appetites which are Natural unto us.

That they dash the Pleasure of Conversation, by threatening every word that is impertinent, or awry, with the dreadful Day of Judgment, Matth. 12. 36. Which, instead of Chearfulness in a Mans self, and Courtesie to his Friends, may in Him excite an anxious Fearfulness, and towards them a silent or morose Deportment.

That they require the Loving of Enemies, even while they persist to be injurious; which, they say, deprives us of that sense of Honour and Courage, which, as we are Men, should belong to us; and makes way also for new and greater Injuries to be done us.

That they enjoyn the Maccrating the Body with Fasting and Abstinence; which, what is it but the making a Man cruel to his own Flesh?

Yea, that they bind us to part with our Estates and Lives for the asserting the Gospel, when merely some outward Compliance, and a Denial of some few things only, and this no otherwise than in shew for a time, would preserve us: Which is an hard saying, and who, say they, can bear it?

Eubul. Truly, I think, this is the whole, they can object; and with how little Reason they do it, I shall, I trust, sufficiently shew.

As to the first, viz. That the Laws of Christ beat down those Inclinations and Appetites which are Natural to us, (which Objection may seem to have some kind of share in all the other,) we say,

That Inclinations and Appetites may be considered either as belonging to Nature in a pure and perfect State, or, as it is corrupted and depraved; (for deeply corrupted our Nature is, and was observed so to be by the Heathen wise Men, though they were ignorant of the cause why it was so.) Now the Laws of Christ do not oppose Mens In-

clinations and Appetites, considering Nature in its perfect State ; but do then only correct and curb them, when, by reason of the Corruption of our Nature, they are crooked and irregular, and lanch out into Vicious Excesses.

In a word, The Design of our Lord, in his Laws, is, to reduce us, as much as possible, to our Primitive Perfection : Not, in a Stoical manner, to beat down our Appetites, but to rectifie them, that they may be truly commendable in themselves, and may convince us of the Equity of the Commands of Christ, by giving an Internal Pleasure and Satisfaction unto us. For if any Man do his Will, he shall quickly find, that his Commands are not grievous, but that all his Ways are Pleasantness, and all his Paths are Peace.

If it shall be urged, That our Natures are here incapable of such a Perfection as is talk'd of, and therefore that the Laws which enjoyn it are unreasonable ; we may reply,

That our Natures, as now they are, are capable of far greater Perfection and Regularity, than these, who thus plead, are willing to admit of. And we may say, that even now there are Inclinations of two sorts ; Those that arise from Nature, and Those that we ourselves do, in a great measure, make. Nature requires but what is enough ; but ill Desires, heightned by ill Customs, require for Luxury and Excess. Now, Temperance amidst our Earthly Enjoyments ; Contentation in the State which God hath placed us in ; A Readiness to part with something of our Abundance, for the good of those that need ; A Charity in interpreting their Actions well ; And a neglecting of Vain-glory, and such like things as these, are not such impossible things to be performed ; Nay, the contrary shall perhaps bring more Difficulties and Pains, than the Observance of these Laws shall.

For

For we must not forget, that there is such a thing as *Reason*, which is no less Natural unto us than any Inclinations or Appetites we have ; yea, it may justly claim the Precedence of them. They being, in a great measure, common unto *Us* and *Beasts* ; but This the Peculiar of *Men* only. And what is the use of this thing call'd *Reason*, which is so Natural unto us, but this, *viz.* To regulate our Appetites and Inclinations when they grow exorbitant, and to give us the great Satisfaction of having acted like Men ?

So that, in an impartial Consideration of things, it will be found to be more agreeable to Nature to repress our sensitive Appetites and Inclinations by Reason, than to give them their swinge without Reason : The Rational part in Man being far the more Noble.

Now, Reason cannot but approve of, and close with, these Excellent and Refined Laws of our Lord. Nay, our Inclinations themselves, would we but seriously set ourselves to the bringing them into order, might, in some time, be duly brought into it,

And, truly, it hath been very well observed of the Constitutions of particular Persons, (and we therein may give Praise to him that made us,) that as every Temperament doth, some way or other, evilly dispose the Man, so his being thus disposed sets him at the greater distance from another Evil. As the being prone to Fearfulness removes him far from the opposite Evil of Presumptuousness. Nay, he is hereby rendred something inclined to that Good, which lies next to his Disposition ; the All-wise God so ordering it, that defects are not wholly destitute of something at Hand to make them up. Thus, the being Cholerick inclines the Man to Zealousness, Melancholy bends him towards Devotion. The being Phlegmatick borders him upon Perseverance.

rance. A Proneness to Anger prompts him to Activeness. So that if we ourselves will but be prudent and resolute in bringing the ill inclinations of our Nature, or of our particular Constitutions, into Order, according to the Laws of our Lord, we shall find it a work not so intolerably hard, as some would make it, and would have others believe it to be.

And as thus our Dispositions, if well managed, are not averse from a right Improvement; so our Affections and Desires, if they be but removed from an Object less good to one that is more Excellent, (and this may oftentimes easily be done,) they may retain the same earnestness, and find more rational Gratifications: Yea, sometimes the Work is less; and it is only the bringing the Affection something lower, or raising it a little higher, and the Object need not be changed.

We see, how much Use and Exercise will prevail upon Men's Bodies, to make them Supple and Pliant unto those Motions, which Nature, of itself, is unacquainted with; and shall the Soul of Man not be able to correct Natural, but Corrupt Inclinations? Let us take but as much pains with our Souls, as some have done with their Bodies, and I doubt not, but (through Gods Grace,) we shall make them as pliable to the Motions of Goodness and Virtue, as some Men's Joynts and Limbs are to those Motions which at the first they were so unapt unto.

It was, as I Remember, in the Objection you brought, That *These Laws are unreasonable to us as we are Men*; whereas, *Theophilus*, as we are Men, they, in a peculiar manner, are fitted for *Us*, and for no Beings beside. Those that are Brutal, by their being destitute of understanding, are below them: And those that are Heavenly (*viz.* Blessed Angels and

and Saints) seem to be above them ; whose Appetites, wholly bent to the love of Holiness, can never be guilty of excess. Their Pleasures admit of no Temperance nor Restrictions ; but the more high, and exerted they be, the more refined and excellent they are. But we are of a middle Nature, between the Brutal and the Heavenly ; and partake something of both. Our Pleasures are dangerous ; our Appetites are very apt to be excessive ; and we have Understanding to moderate and repress them ; and therefore we are carefully to do it, that from such Voluntary Restraints we may be Virtuous, and have praise both with God and Men.

And indeed, a curbing of the Appetites of Nature, even these Men themselves, however they object it against the Laws of Christ, will, upon more considerate thoughts, like well of and commend.

They cannot but approve of the Fidelity of those to each other, whom the Marriage-Bond hath united ; and they would detest a Spurious Issue to be brought forth by those whom they have by Wedlock enclosed to themselves alone : But this could not be, but by some restraint put upon those Appetites which are Natural.

And shall they be willing to admit of such Restraints for the good of the Community, and for their own satisfaction also ; and shall they find fault with them in Religion ?

And if the Holy Laws of Christ shall not only make us fit to live among Men, by putting a Bridle on those Inclinations, as to the outward Act ; but shall also render us well-pleasing in the sight of God, by keeping up Chastity in the Heart, and a Cleanness in the Soul ; shall any be so devoid of Reason, as to urge this as an Argument against the Laws of Christ, and not rather be willing to esteem it the Honour

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Honour of these Laws, and the great Credit of those who give Obedience to them?

This they may be sure of, that the prohibiting some Inclinations, even as to their most inward Motions, however it may seem severe, is yet in reality the facilitating of our Obedience, as to the whole of it. For, how easie is it for him to abstain from Adultery, who dares not lust? The Laws would have been difficult indeed, if they had forbidden the Effects, and, at the same time, allow'd the Appetites.

Yea, I might yet further say, That there is in our Nature a Principle of Modesty and Shamefacedness, which doth as much resist unclean and carnal Actings, as our Inclinations may seem to promote them. And he who keeps under his Appetite, doth not offer so great a Violence to his Nature, as he doth, who, by giving the Reins to his sensual Desires, brings Shame and a Blush.

Disgrace before Men sits more uneasie upon the libidinous Actor, than the restraining of his Appetite would have done. This later would have been but his private pain (if his pain,) for a time; the other lasts the longer for being publick, and strikes a greater torment into him by being so.

Yea, though the unclean Person should escape Cognizance of Men, yet his own Thoughts would upbraid him, as having acted poorly, and below the Excellence of a Man.

I have, *Theophilus*, been as earnest and long upon this Subject, as if these Men had been present with us; and I wish they had been so, if what we have said might have had any good effect upon them. I am sure, could we regulate their Wills, it would be no difficult thing to convince their Understandings, That the Laws of our Lord are, in respect of Natural Inclinations and Appetites, very reasonable, yea, truly excellent.

Theoph.

Theoph. Well it would be, that, if these Men will not, by a right managing of their Appetites, be Virtuous, they were of that Rank of Creatures, which, by an uncontroul'd yielding to their Inclinations, are not Vicious.

Eubul. But let us proceed to another unreasonable thing, which they object against the Christian Laws: *viz.* That they dash the pleasure of Conversation, by threatening every Word that is impertinent, or awry, with the dreadful day of Judgment, Matt. 12. 36. which, instead of Cheerfulness in a Mans self, and Courtesie to his Friends, may in Him excite an Anxious Fearfulness, and towards Them a silent or Morose deportment.

It is, *Theophilus*, a very great mistake concerning idle Words, to think, that an innocent Cheerfulness, and a kind and Courteous Converse, is struck at by our Lord. No, were there nothing else, his Example might teach us to interpret him otherwise. He came not, as *John* the Baptist, in a rough and severe manner, But Eating and Drinking, &c. in an Amicable, Friendly, and Sociable way, Having the Law of kindness in his Mouth; and obliging Men unto him by his Verbal Expressions, as well as doing them good by his outward Actions.

There are two Interpretations of our Lawgivers Speech concerning idle Words. One is, That, by them, all such Words are meant, as are Un-profitable both to those that speak them, and those whom they are spoken unto.

The other Interpretation is this, That all Evil, False, and reviling Words, are primarily meant. The occasion of our Lords speaking them, being from the Pharisees, saying, That he cast out Devils by Beelzebub the Prince of the Devils. Hereupon we are told, that *ῥῆμα ἀργόν* Idle Word is sometimes read *ῥῆμα πόνερον* Evil Word. And though the word *ἀργόν* should be the truer Reading, yet still it would be

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be but little different ; for *αἰσῶν* signifies *Vain* ; and *Vain* is, in Scripture-meaning, the same with *False*.

But, *Theophilus*, take whether of these Interpretations, you will ; I cannot see how the pleasure of Conversation will thereby be beaten down. He would deserve to be excluded from all Friendly Society, who should censure innocent Freedom, and cheerful Talk, in the number of idle Words. If in the midst of worldly cares and trouble, they refresh and recreate the Speakers and Hearers, how can they be said to be useless to both ? Nay, if they Administer to the Vertues of Courteousness and Affability, of Kindness and Friendship, the account of them, at the last day, we may hope, will be joyful ; And so, the Anxious Fearfulness, and the Silent or Morose Deportment (which was talk'd of,) may be laid aside.

It is very fit, that the *Best Member*, which a Man hath, should be under a Law ; and I readily yield, that by Idle Words, the *Filthiness*, and *Foolish Talking*, and *Jestings that are not convenient* ; and likewise, all Malicious and Perverse Speaking, are utterly forbidden. But by the Prohibition of these, and by the Tongues being brought under a Law, Conversation is very much promoted ; which, were there no Government over the Mouth, would be shrewdly Wounded, if not quite overthrown. An Ingenious Person would choose the greatest Solitude rather than Company, should he there find Tongues let loose to Idle Impertinencies ; or imploy'd in nothing but Obscenities, or Scurrilous and Unfavorable Reflections.

Neither will Conversation be lessen'd, or rendred less pleasing, by the intermixture of matters that are more Serious and Profitable : And these are reckoned, by the most Ingenious of all the Poets, the best Enjoyments of Society. *Sermo oritur non de villis, domibusque alienis ; Nec bene necne Lepos Saltet.* We talk

talk not, saith he, of other Folks business and affairs; nor yet enquire, whether such an one Danceth well or no; *Sed quod magis ad nos pertinet, & nescire malum est, agitamus*; but, what more concerns us, and which it would ill become us to be ignorant of, That is our Discourse. As whether Riches or Vertue make Men Happy: Whether Honesty or Profit should be the ground of Friendship: What is the Nature of Goodness; and wherein it is, that the chief Good consisteth, Christianity well allows of such Discourse, and affords a large Field for it. And surely, the Heavens or the Earth, the effects of Providence at large, or those things that more immediately relate to our own or Neighbours advantage, may seem little obliged to us, if they cannot engage us from idle or disingenuous Speeches.

Some, (*Theophilus*,) for the avoiding of Idle Words have addicted themselves, in all Companies, to the talk of Religion; and somtimes (not to the pleasure of all,) have been forward to declare their own particular Evidences, and the secret Favours of God to their Souls: Thinking it, possibly, no more than their duty so to do. But, surely, the former is not necessary: *Let your Speech be seasoned with Salt*, implies, (as one well Comments it,) that as our Meat should have a Relish from Salt, so our Speech should have the Savour of Religion. But that it should be wholly of Religion, is not any more necessary than that our Meat should be wholly Salt. And for the later, I may say, That Spiritual Evidences, and the Secret Favours which God may have vouchsafed to us, should have a kind of Modesty attending them, which should forbid the seeking after Auditors and Spectators. He, that said *Cerne, Dionysia, fastum deposui*, See, *Dionysia*, I have no Pride left, was perchance the more Proud from his Boasted Humility.

Such joyful Sentiments of Gods Mercy and Love should, in some respect, imitate godly Sorrow and holy Fasting; causing the Man *to enter into his Closet, that he may not appear unto Men to rejoyce; Satisfied with his Eye alone, who puts such Gladness into the Heart*: Or else imparting it to one, or some Christian Friends only, where he shall not be thought to appear *in uxor*, some great one, dearer unto God than other Men.

And thus, *Theophilus*, you see, what little reason there is for the finding fault with our Saviours Laws, as if by forbidding *idle Words*, they overturned all the pleasure of Society. They rather provide, that Conversation shall have the more pleasure, by all foolish, impertinent, deceitful, and opprobrious Talks being discarded from it; and by such excellent and useful variety of Discourses being afforded, as shall be befitting Men to use. In a word, they allow us to be Innocently Chearful, but not Extravagantly Merry; and command our Conversation to be Religious, yet free from Affectedsness and Indiscretion.

Theoph. I see, we have reason to use some of our words in Thankfulness to our Lawgiver, who hath indulged us such a Freedom, as by them to exercise all the chearful Virtues, that nourish and commend a sociable Conversation. Whoever it is, that loves the innocent Enjoyments of Acquaintance and Friends; the kind Expressions which they use to each other; the grateful Entertainment of profitable and ingenious Discourses, (and who is it, that loves them not?) must also love the Laws of our Lord, which banish all those words that shall any way corrupt or sower so great a Pleasure. And whosoever shall find fault with these Laws, as if they enjoined a moroseness of Temper, either do not understand them, or else are for such a licentious and ill-natur'd way

way of Converse, as even an Honest Heathen would condemn.

Eubul. *The next unreasonable Thing is the Loving of Enemies, even while they persist to be injurious; which, they say, deprives us of that sense of Honour and Courage, which, as we are Men, should belong unto us; and makes way also for new and greater Injuries to be done us.*

But that the Loving of Enemies, even when they persist to be injurious, is not so unreasonable a thing, may hence appear; Because some of the better sort of Heathens, who had Nature chiefly their Guide, have gone a good step towards it; and do commend the with-holding of Revenge, as very honourable in those that do it, and do urge many good Arguments for it. *Nempe hoc indocti, They are the ignorant sort, that would vent their spleen upon their Enemies: But Chrysippus non dicit idem, Learn'd Chrysippus is of another mind, and mild Thales, and wise Socrates, Qui partem accepta salva inter vincla ciente, Accusatori nollet dare: Who, though, by false Accusations, thrown into Prison, and condemned to end his Life by drinking Poison, would yet, could he have done it, not have given his Accuser a part with him, Juv. Sat. 13.* So that if it be Unreasonable, it is not altogether the fault of Christianity; and they, in some measure, must condemn Those, who have been accounted Wise Men in the World, and the great Promoters of Virtue, before they can find fault with the Laws of our Lord.

And, indeed, when the visible things of the World do all joyn together (as they manifestly do,) in a kind of mutual Concord, for the promoting the welfare of Men; (The Sun and Stars not shining to themselves; The Earth not bringing forth Herbs and Fruit upon her own Account; nor the Beasts
and

and Fowls feeding merely for their own Lives ; but all of these, either immediately or mediately, for Mans use and Service.) And also when Men are born into the World more impotent (as truly they are,) than any other Creatures ; naked altogether and helpless, for a longer time, than what brings many other things to their full Growth and Perfection ; and this, that they may owe their being nurs'd up to the Tenderness and Care of others ; it may seem to do more than hint, That, as Friendship and Good-will is highly to be maintain'd amongst us, so when, by any Persons, they are broken, the Breach is not to be continued ; but (by friendly yieldings, and the being affected with pity towards the Distemper of Mens Minds, as we usually are towards the Diseases of their Bodies,) is presently to be closed up. For shall the good of Men, which is so carried on by all things else, be neglected by ourselves ? Or shall the *Passion of a Man*, which may quickly wear off, prevail more for our *Disrespect*, than the *Dignity of Human Nature* shall for our *kindness* to him ?

But, suppose that a Retaliation of Injuries be not naturally against Justice ; yet, certainly, these Men, who urge the unreasonableness of Loving Enemies, cannot but grant, that, in case the History of our Redemption be true, it is but just and equitable, that our Enemies, while they are Enemies, should be Loved.

For, *while we were Enemies to Christ, he dyed for us ;* while we had provoked God to throw his Wrath upon us ; a Wrath which would have been greater than we could have born ; our Blessed Lord, in pity to us, came from Heaven to Save us.

And when We, merely by being Loved as Enemies, are preserved from destruction, shall We think it such an unreasonable thing to bear a Loving respect towards Those who are our Enemies ? Especially

cially, when the greatest Trespasses which they can commit against us, are nothing in Comparison of those which we have committed against God ; and which are forgiven us by Him.

Besides, as Christ hath born our Image by taking upon him our Nature, so there is none of our Enemies but retain in their Nature, as they are Men, the Honour that our Lord hath done us ; and, in some sort, do wear his Image. And can we, if we rightly weigh things, shew any thing but Love there, where is a Resemblance of the Son of Man, who hath shewed the greatest Love to us ?

And though Injuries be done us by Those, who bear the likeness of Him that never did wrong to any Man, yet so far should those Injuries be from hindring of our Love, that they should rather put us in Mind of those great Sins against God, which we daily must be forgiven : And so should quicken us to do that to our Brethren, which God in far greater measures, through the Death of Christ, doth unto us.

Whence, supposing that there is Truth in Christs being our Saviour, the loving of Enemies, even while they persist to be injurious, is not an unreasonable, but an equitable, thing. And that Christs coming into the World to save us, is a certain Truth we have the highest reason to believe.

But yet, whereas they further say, That the thus loving of Enemies doth take *away that Honour and Courage*, which should belong to us *as Men*, we reply ;

That it contributes much to our Honour and Courage : For he that forgives an Injury, is always, in the Act of forgiving, Superiour unto him who is forgiven. And, in not permitting the Miscarriages of others to disorder his Passions, he doth maintain a Greatness of Spirit, which some others, who are

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presently for Revenge and drawing of Swords, are far short of. *Minuti semper & infirmi est animi, exiguique voluptas Ultio*, is a true saying of the Satyrist: It is the part of a mean Soul to be looking after Revenge, and taking pleasure in it.

And that Honour which is so much talk'd of, and, most an end, so much stood upon, what is it usually but a Reputation among the vainer, and most injudicious sort of Men? And what pitifully mean Matters shall engage some in long and costly Law-Suits, and others in the venturing their Lives, upon the Account of this empty Reputation and Honour?

Let a Man shew himself to be such, who can value an Ingenuous and Christian Carriage towards him; and who can resent the contrary, but yet will not permit any unworthiness of others to get the upper-hand of his Reason and Charity: Let him manifest to all about him, that he is a Lover of Men; that he desires their good, much more than he stomachs the wrongs they have done him: That he is more inclinable (if they will give him leave,) to shew Kindness to them, than to act any thing of Revenge: That he leaves all Revenge unto God, whom it belongs unto; and yet earnestly prays, that God will not execute it: Let him do all these things, and he will gain more Honour with those that are the most understanding, sober and good, (from whom alone Honour deserves to be termed so,) than the Man ever shall, who rageth at every petty Injury, and breathes nothing but Threatning and Revenge.

Yea, and lastly, instead of those new and greater Injuries, which, from such a behaviour towards Enemies, are said to have a fairer way made to fall upon him, there will be, in all likelihood, the quite contrary effect,

For who is he, that will be forward to injure the Man, who, he sees, is willing to be a Friend to all? And, if he hath injured him already, when he considers he hath injured so much Goodness, how will he cast (as it were,) the first Stone at himself; be troubled at his fault, and endeavour to repair it, by a Submissive and Relenting Carriage?

But if the Offendor be Stubborn, and not so easily brought down, yet the Offended Man's Christian and Charitable Deportment, without interruption continued, will surely at last melt him. To this end is that Precept, and the Reason of it, *Rom. 12. 20. If thine Enemy Hunger, Feed him; if he Thirst, give him Drink; for, in so doing, thou shalt heap Coals of Fire upon his Head.* It is a way of Speech alluding unto those who are Melters of Metals; when a Metal is very hard they not only put Fire under it, but heap Coals upon it, and by this means, though hard to be Melted it be, yet at last it yields to the Fire.

So when to an Enemy, though of an obstinate and most hardned Temper, a Christian Love shall still be shewn; and kindnesses, upon good occasions, be heaped upon his Head, He must be harder than Iron or Brass who will not be sensible of them, and suffer his Evil to be overcome with Good.

Theoph. He would deserve that Those, who are Enemies to him, should for ever go on so to be; and that others, not his Enemies, should very little esteem him, who, after such Considerations as these, shall say, That it is unreasonable to Love Enemies, even while they are such.

Eubul. But let us go to the Fourth thing, which they object against these Laws, viz. *That they require the Macerating of the Body with Fasting and Abstinence; which, what is it, but the making a Man Cruel to his own Flesh?*

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I freely acknowledge, *Theophilus*, That Fasting is a Christian Duty ; and that when our Lord saith, *when thou Fastest enter into thy Closet*, though it be not in the plain form of a Command, Thou shalt Fast, yet it is not hereby the less a Command. And the reason is, because our Saviour, from the frequent Practice of Fasting, and the great Credit which this Duty among the Jews was in, did suppose it to be a Duty. And by his Precepts for the right performance of it, he may well be presum'd to enjoin the thing. And therefore in his Sermon he ranks it with Prayer and Alms : Which Duties (and I may say, which Sermon too, as to every part of it,) concern the Practice of Christians, so long as the World stands.

But, wherein, *Theophilus*, is it that the harshness of this Law of Fasting lies ?

If our Bodies are apt (as too apt they are,) from constant Feeding, not to serve, but to rebel against the better part of us, our Souls ; is it so unreasonable a thing to withdraw for a time their wonted Nourishment ; that from them our Prayers and Praises may not be Drowsie : And our better thoughts not Clogg'd ?

Or, if out of a Sense of our own Unworthiness, we shall sometimes lay aside all our enjoyments ; refusing to Eat the Fat, and Drink the Sweet ; that, in the sight of God, we may acknowledge ourselves less than the least of his Mercies ; (which sure by reason of our continual Failings we too truly are,) what sober Man can condemn us for so doing ?

Or, lastly, if we shall make a suitable Expression of Repentance for some Sins, which have chiefly proceeded from the Body, by exercising upon it an holy Revenge, and denying it, for a season, the things which are pleasant ; They must be very unreasonable Men, who will say, That we do more than what is meet to be done. The

The Religions even of the Heathens have not been without their Abstinences, as their *Votiva nodæ* do testifie; and their Wise Men have addicted themselves thereunto. Hence *Lucilius* is by *Seneca* exhorted to fare sometimes so hard, *Liberaliora ut sint alimenta Carceris*, That the Diet of a Prison should exceed his. Nay, *Epicurus* himself (whom these Objectors against Christianity are so willing to have their Master,) had his certain days, *quibus malignè famem extingueret, nec toto asse pasceretur*. Which things surely may teach These Men not to condemn our Holy Religion, by reason of the Abstinence which it enjoyns; especially since this Abstinence is used for Ends so much higher than the other, and such as are truly excellent.

So distant, *Theophilus*, are the Laws of Christ from the Imputation of Cruelty on the account of Fasting, that they allow us, ordinarily, the moderate Use, and, on Festival Days, whether Civil or Sacred, the more plentiful Enjoyment of Gods good Creatures, so far as they shall minister to an Innocent or Religious Chearfulness of Body and Soul. Nay, even in the very exercise of Fasting, our Bodies are not to be enfeebled, (as some Religious Mens of old were, whose Excesses this way will rather be forgiven than rewarded,) but only made such as they ought to be, obedient to the Soul and to God. Yea, we thereby contribute to their Health and Welfare; which, by fulness of Bread, and excess of Wine, are too often destroyed. And, what is the chief thing of all, we, by so doing, provide that they shall hereafter, to their endless Happiness, be Spiritual Bodies. If this be cruelty to ourselves, I know not, *Theophilus*, what will be kindness. This is certain, that amidst such Acts of Mortification, there ariseth a secret, but very great, Content and Satisfaction. He who hath truly tryed, knoweth it to be so.

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And then, for the Last Fault that they find with these Laws, *viz. That they bind us to part with our Estates and Lives for the asserting our Religion, when meerly some outward Compliance, and a denying of some few things only, and this no otherwise than in shew for a time, would preserve us; which, say they, is a hard saying, and who can bear it?* We answer;

That we very seldom are brought to these Extremities; our holy Religion ordinarily providing, that from the sweetness of Nature, which it teacheth us to nourish amongst Men, we should enjoy both Estates and Lives with Peace and Safety.

But then, *Theophilus*, when our Lives and Welfare are, in the usual course of the World, so well by our Lawgiver designed; and Blessings in his Gospel are made known unto us, so much better than Life, and all the Enjoyments of it; Can it seem so hard a saying, that, in a seldom and special Exigence, we should, to the loss of Estate and even of Life itself, confess this Lawgiver, and bear witness to this Gospel?

Should our Lord have done so great things for us, and permitted us to affirm or deny them, as, from hopes or fears in this World, we should see good, He himself would have been much wanting to the Religion he taught, and we might with some reason have questioned the Truth of it, when its Author was so little concerned for the Esteem, and Honour, it should have among Men. So that, in a right estimate of things, upon supposition that the Christian Religion is true, our Lord could not, in Justice and Wisdom have done less, than required the parting with Estate and Life for the maintaining of it.

And These Men, *Theophilus*, however they stand so much upon their Lives and Incomes in this particular, will yet be forward enough to venture them
for

for the vindicating of their own Truth and Right ; or for the asserting the Reputation of a Friend ; in things, on either Hand, mean enough. And they'll think, that, in Generosity, they are bound thus to do. Why then should they so much shrink of their Courage, for the sober and deliberate maintaining of Truth, and Priviledges, that so highly concern them ; and of the Honour of their Lord, who hath been, and is, a Friend, beyond what the Friendship of all Men in the World, were it amass'd together, could amount unto ? Indeed, were there an end of all Happiness and Being, when this Life should end, we could the less blame Men, if they, upon no Accounts, would part with their Lives ; and, upon very few, let go their Estates. But when Christianity holds out a better Inheritance, and a better Life unto those, who shall be willing to become Poor, or to Dye for the Sake of Christ, and his Gospel, there is more encouragement to hazard, yea, to lose all, in this cause, than in the best cause the World affords beside.

But, whereas it is urged, that when a mere outward Compliance, and a Denial only of some few things ; and this, no otherwise than in Shew for a Time, would preserve us, we are then unreasonably required to suffer ; I would ask, What way there is to Confess our Lord and Assert our Religion before Men, besides that of outward Gestures and Words ? For the Heart, Men cannot discern ; and the Thoughts are beyond their Search. Where therefore, there is an External Compliance with those that are Enemies to Christ, and we Say as they Say ; and Do as they Do ; we deny Christ before Men, as fully as we know how to do.

And surely the denying of only some things in our Holy Religion, cannot be thought to be made amends for, by other things being retain'd. For, by the

same reason, that One part of Christianity is denied, any Other part, or All, may in the like manner be so too.

Neither, let any one imagine that there can be a denying of Christ, which shall be only the Work of *the Nerves and Muscles*, (as once a Jew said his confessing of Christ was,) the *Heart*, in the meantime, *not consenting*, and thereby continuing *Sound*. For the Heart must needs be Faulty and False, when it shall suffer the Mouth to speak Deceitful Things. Our Lords undissembled bearing of Poverty and Want, Scandals and Reproaches; and his most Faithful Suffering of the most Bitter and Accursed Death for our Welfare, doth certainly deserve, that, when good occasion requires, we should openly and fairly undergo the loss of Earthly Enjoyments, and of Life itself, for his Honour: and, with the last drop of our Blood, bear witness to that Religion, for the Confirmation of which he shed his own most pretious Blood. This is the way for us to *fill up* that *which is behind of the Sufferings of Christ; in our Flesh*. For none of his Sufferings for our *Expiation* are behind; Those he hath wholly undergone himself, and no Man could joyn with him in them: But a room for our *Testimony* to the Truth of his Gospel he hath left; and herein we can share with him in his Sufferings. And this let us do, willing to lose some few years to come, (which, were we free from Troubles, we, upon the Account of Mortality, could not be sure of,) rather than cast a blot upon all the years of our Life past. Yea, disesteeming this whole short Life, and all the Pleasures and Profits of it, in Comparison of that Crown and Bliss, which are prepared for those who are faithful unto Death. Though, truly, our Lord is very desirous that our Lives should be saved, rather than destroy'd, if, by any honest and upright means, they so can be. And therefore

therefore he allows, yea commands us, if we be persecuted in one City, to flee unto another; and, if with Integrity we can preserve our Lives, by no means to lose them.

However, let not this Command of our Lord, which requires us to part with Estates and Lives rather than deny him, be faulted as too rigid and hard, while the Rewards are so much beyond the Pains; and while so many of Those, who have thus suffered, have had such Assistances and Joys afforded them, even in the midst of their Sufferings, that a Man would almost wish for their Sorrows, could he but have their Joys together with them. From all which it may appear, *Theophilus*, that the Air (as was objected,) is not too pure to be breath'd in; and that they are not unreasonable Heights of Duty which are required of us.

Neither may it disturb us, that this our Work is not, without difficulty, to be begun, and, in like manner, for some time, to be carried on by us. For it is, in a sort, a Priviledge which *Angels* have not, to testify unto Pains, yea even unto Death itself, the Sincerity of Obedience. Which Testification of Sincerity, although it ariseth from an Imperfection of Human Nature, will yet be very acceptable unto God; possibly, no less than that of the Holy Ones Above, which is wholly free from all such Conflicts.

And, while the chief Intent of our Lawgiver is to make us *Pious* towards God, *Composed* in our own Breasts, *Loving* unto others, and *Loved* again by them; *Perfect* as our Father in Heaven is perfect, who makes his Sun to rise on the Evil and on the Good; and meting only the same measure to others, which hath first been meted, by the Love and Compassion of our Lord, unto us; we must, one would think, use very much Violence to the better Inclinations

ons of our Souls, if we do not entirely love these Laws.

As for mine own part, *Theophilus*, (will you give me leave to speak my Heart freely to you ?) my Love is so great to them, that, methinks, I would obey them all, not so much because I am commanded to do it, as because they are every way in themselves so worthy to be loved. I could wish, that they were even one with my Soul; and that all my Thoughts and Actions might proceed not more from Life, than from Them. And, so far would I be from questioning the goodness of them, that I would as soon doubt, whether it were good to Live and be Happy. So dear are they unto me; yea, so much better than Life itself.

Theoph. I am much prevail'd upon by the Reasons you have given; and your last Affectionate Words add so much a further weight to those Reasons, that they appear to me not to be more the Issues of your Brain than of your Heart. And therefore you may, on good Grounds, presume, that they will be convincing to others, when they have first been so to yourself.

But, though I acknowledge the Laws of our Lord to require most reasonable things of us; and do find that they truly have an high place in my Esteem and Love; yet I'll confels to you, *Eubulus*, much dejected I am somtimes, when I reflect upon my many Failures. Resolve, indeed, I do, for the greatest Care and Circumspection, but yet my Sins do daily increase upon me; and what will it boot me to love these Laws, when every day I transgress them? To own them so admirably fitted for the perfecting of our Nature, and the refining of our Practise, when I see mine own Nature so imperfect under them, and my Practie so impure in Comparison of them?

Eubul. What

Eubul. What you now say, *Theophilus*, makes way for, and will best be answer'd, by the Consideration of the Fourth thing, *viz.*

That from these Laws we have a fair way for the Pardon of all Sins.

Most perfect these Laws are, (as you have heard,) but by reason of that weakness, which is within us, and those many strong Temptations, which are without, they are not like to be perfectly obeyed. All that we can do, is, as it were, a great way off to behold and admire that perfection, which we cannot of ourselves attain unto; and to grieve, that we daily and hourly, some way or other have Sinned against it.

But yet *there is hope in Israel concerning this thing*, Our Blessed Lord knowing our frame and make; and seeing that our strength and abilities are but small, hath added two other Laws of Faith and Repentance, in which we may find some cheering, in respect of those many Breaches of the Divine Laws, which lie as a weight upon our Souls.

That of Faith requires thus much of us.

That we believe in Christ as a Saviour, who, by his precious Blood for us Shed, hath appeased Gods Wrath, and obtain'd Remission for all the Sins of Men; and for ours, in that number. And from the mighty importance of this Law, and the infinite benefits it affordeth unto us, the whole Gospel, and all the Laws thereof, are, in a comprehensive Word, called the *Law of Faith*.

And, in this respect, it is much different from the Old Law. Perfect Obedience was required by That, and because perfection of Obedience is necessarily grounded upon a perfection of Nature, the Law seemeth therefore to have been the Rule, not of our Works only, but of our Nature also; which at the Creation was committed pure into our Hands.

But

But this Law of Faith, by reason of Human Natures having *been* perfect in Christ, and having *Done* also, without the least failure, whatsoever was Incumbent on the Representative of Mankind to do; and, as united with the Divine Nature, having *suffered* likewise what Punishment was Due to the Sins of Men; this Law, I say, of Faith doth Command that we should not rely upon any Righteousness of our own? not yet Despair for any Sin, whether belonging to our Nature, or more particularly to our own Persons; but should have our Eyes upon Him, who alone, by his Merits, hath purchased Salvation for us.

The Law of Repentance is this, *viz.*

That we truly be sorry for what Sins soever we commit; and do heartily endeavour an amendment of Life. And this shall be available, through the Death of Christ, for our Pardon.

Repentance shall not, *Theophilus*, be unto Sins, after the same manner, as Sacrifices in *Moses* Law were. Not the small Sins only shall be done away, but the great ones also shall no less. For he who hath called us unto Repentance, hath been a propitiation for all the Sins of Mankind alike; for those of a deeper Dye, as well as those of a lighter Stain: And his Blood is, against the greatest Offences, and the smallest Infirmities, equally Efficacious. Of Old, if a Man had unwillingly Kill'd his Brother, and was truly sorry for it, the avenger of Blood was, notwithstanding, allowed to Slay him, if he could overtake him before he reach'd to the City of Refuge. The Sin here (if it were not rather an unhappiness,) was so far imputed, as That he must dye for it, if another could run faster than he; which might happen to be a thing beyond his power to prevent. And though this might stir up a dread of willful Murder, and a tender care to preserve the Lives of others.

others, by signifying the Blood of Man to be of so great account, that even He, who shed it against his will, was not to be esteemed wholly innocent; it yet might seem to be very severe. But, under Christs Laws, the Sins which we truly repent of, shall not be reckoned to our account, merely for some accidental Occurrences, which we could not by any foresight put by. Much less shall an unavoidable Ignorance, or Errour, without a Sin, bring punishment upon us. No Sin is there, which Repentance will not obtain Forgiveness for, except one alone, and that is *The Sin against the Holy Ghost, which will never be forgiven, neither in this World, nor in that which is to come*; neither under the Jewish State, nor the Gospel Dispensation. And yet even This Sin (if now it can be committed, when the miraculous Demonstration of the Spirit is ceased,) is not impardonable in Men so, as if Repentance, were it there, could not prevail for Remission: But it is therefore impardonable, because it is attended with an impenitent Obdurateness, and a perverse Obstinacy against the Means of Salvation, so graciously and evidently set forth unto them.

Those words to *Simon Magus*, Acts 8. 22. *Repent of this thy Wickedness, if perhaps the Thought of thine Heart may be forgiven thee*, shew not that St. Peter doubted whether the fault would be remitted, though there should be true Repentance; but that the doubt was, whether the Repentance would be true or no. Or rather, that way of speech imports the Apostle not as one that doubteth, but as one that encourageth a Sinner in a most difficult case to repent. And *Esau's finding no place of Repentance*, (Heb. 12. 17.) though he sought it carefully with Tears, doth by no means signifie that either himself did not repent, or that his true Repentance would not be accepted with God; (much less that any truly repentant under the

the Gospel may, in some cases, fail of Forgiveness of his Sins;) But that he found no such Repentance in his *Father Isaac*, as to reverse the Blessing, which, through mistake, (but by God's especial Providence so ordering it,) he had given to *Jacob* the younger Brother.

The Denying Repentance, as some Christian Doctors in antient Times did, to those who sinned after Baptism, did very ill commend the Administration of Baptism unto Infants; who might seem thereby to be put into a more dangerous estate, than, had they not known the Font, they would have been; and it was a Severity which had no true warrant from our Lord, or his Apostles. And though the Primitive Church did not admit Adulterers, Idolaters, and Murtherers to Repentance; and also did utterly refuse Those, on their Death-bed, as unpardonable Offenders, who had lived wickedly all their Lives; yet she called them unpardonable, not because God would not forgive them, but because it was *in his Power alone* to do it: There being no way (as she thought,) left for pardon, through the Ministry of Ecclesiastick Persons, to be had. Or, at least, since Absolution would have been, in some sort, a warranting of the pardon, she thought it better not to grant it, in such hazardous cases, than not to satisfy herself in the doing it. But yet she never thought, how great soever the Sin or Sins were, that there would not certainly be a place for pardon, where there was a true and worthy Repentance.

And now, *Theophilus*, who would not be cheered amidst his dejectedness for Sins, from such merciful Laws, as these are? Who would not love the Laws, which allow such easie Terms for Pardon and Happiness? If our Lawgiver had required some great thing of us, would we not have done it? How much more, when

when he commands such equal and reasonable things as these are?

Theoph. You have much quieted my Fears: And those Clouds which sometimes hang upon my Soul, are, in great measure, blown away. Only, methinks, I am more than ordinarily concern'd at my Sins, since they have been committed against that God, who, from my poor Repentance, is ready to forgive me. And, by my believing in Him, who hath done what Mankind should have done; and suffered, what they should have suffered; I account myself the more obliged, and am, indeed, the more inclined, to obey his Righteous Laws; and, if occasion were, even to suffer for his Sake.

Eubul. You say very well, and by your Words do contribute to the right Conception of Faith, and Repentance. For there are some, who make These to stand in opposition to the other Laws of our Lord; which they, throughout their Lives, do the less scruple to break, because a Pardon is so easie to be had.

Theoph. What you speak, I have, with much concern, observed in more than a few. Some are very willing to think, since their Own Righteousness is not to be relied upon, but Christs Merits alone to be trusted in, that therefore, if they do but *Believe*, it is no matter how they *Live*. And, as if Obedience were not a necessary thing, they have urged those Words of the Apostle, *viz. That the Law, which was Engraven in Stones, is done away*; which, say they, must be meant of the Moral Law; That alone being it, which was Written in the Tables of Stone.

And then, for Repentance; if they Exercise that, many years hence; yea, though it be but a little before their Death, they'll persuade themselves it is time enough. The *Thief* while *on the Cross*; and the *Labourers* at the *Eleventh Hour* were accepted.

Eubul,

Exbul. But, *Theophilus*, how little would the Excellence of the Laws of Faith and Repentance be, if they should make way for such unworthy Practice? And to what purpose are there so many other Laws given by the Son of God, if the Observance of them be of so little Moment? Surely, unless the Enemy of God and all Goodness, be taken into Consultation, it can never be thought, that, when Mankind was miserable by reason of their Sin, Christ Jesus should in such a wonderful manner leave the Glory of Heaven and Shed his most precious Blood, to *this End, viz.* That they might without fear and danger, commit Sin; and with the greater assurance and confidence continue in it.

They willingly are ignorant, that Christ Dyed to Vindicate the *Authority of the Divine Law*, which they had Violated; and that therefore it was afterward more carefully to be obey'd.

They are very ready not to rely upon their own *Righteousness*, but they little consider that the not Relying upon it, doth suppose that Righteousness there is to be, on which they must not rely; and that they should be as careful to practise it, as they are forward not to rely upon it. Otherwise, it would be the Practising of Wickedness, rather than their not Relying on their own Righteousness; which are as far different, as the being humbly Religious, is from the being audaciously Profane.

Nor, doth their *Trusting in Christ's Merits* as having done and suffered what they were to do and suffer, procure them a Pardon of their Sins, so, as they may still persist to be Sinful. All Sins shall be pardoned, for which, under the Law strictly considered, there was no Hope; but not absolutely pardon'd, without any further Consideration or Condition. The great benefit of Faith is this; to wit, *That instead of perfect Obedience, our sincere Endeavours shall*

be accepted. And where *These* are, what Defects soever there be in us, they shall all be made up by the Merits of Christ, *who is our Righteousness*. But no benefit is there to be expected, if we endeavour not at all, or be unsincere in our Endeavours.

The Apostle's words, That the *Law which was engraven in Stones is done away*, are to be understood of the Law as it was part of the *Covenant with the Jews*, not as it was a *Rule for all Men*. In that it was the Law of Nature, and written in the Hearts of Men, before it was written in Tables, it still obligeth, and for ever will oblige, to Obedience. Nor can any one, unless he hath bidden a Farewel to all Reason, imagine that our Lord would bring the Moral Law into the Gospel, delivering it in greater plainness, and raising it to an higher Perfection, that, after all, Mens Obedience thereunto should not be necessary; or that Faith in *Him, who came to destroy the Works of the Devil*, should give a Liberty to the practising those Works.

To be short; *Faith*, though but a single word it be, is yet an highly comprehensive one, and includeth mighty things in it; Such as, in good sort, do correspond to the infinite and wonderful Love which hath been shewn to Mankind. It implyeth a *Knowledge* of the great Mystery of our Redemption: A *Closing* with the Will of God, which is holy and good: A *sober and right use of Reason*: A *Courageous asserting* of our Holy Religion against all Oppositions: An *unfeigned Love* both to God and to Men, with a *deep sense* of our Unworthiness, and an *Affectionate Acknowledgment* of our owing all to the Divine Bounty. Who are they then can think, that if they do but *believe*, it's no matter *how* they live? And from which of all these Actions (which make up the very *Being* of *Faith*,) is there so much as the

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least Countenance to a loose Conversation? Nay, there cannot be stronger Obligations to a *Sober, Righteous, and Godly Life*, than These are; and in the exercise of them, this *Sober, Righteous, and Godly Life* doth consist.

And how, *Theophilus*, can any wrest Repentance for Sin to the *further and more safe committing of Sin*? Shall the Example of the *Thief on the Cross*, which was written for Mens Comfort, administer to their Presumption? They consider not the Eminency of that poor Malefactor's Faith, from which his Repentance did spring. It is not altogether improbable, that this was the first Opportunity he had of believing in Christ. However, the time of his believing, and hoping for Mercy, was very remarkable. That when our Lord was in Torments as well as he, and was destitute of all Earthly Supports, He *Then* should be sought unto: When he was forsaken of his Disciples, derided by the Soldiers, and reviled by the other Thief, as one justly suffering; That *Then* he should be acknowledged as a Lord; That *Then* he should be own'd, and his Mercy thus begg'd, *Lord, have Mercy upon me when thou comest in thy Kingdom*, was a more than ordinary Act of Faith, and a Repentance very much heightned from the time in which it was begun and finished.

But can These, who have been Baptized into Christ's Death, and have given up their Names unto him, as soon almost as they were born, and this with Solemn Vows of *Fighting Manfully under his Banner, against the World, the Flesh and the Devil*; Can These say, That some of the *Last Days* of their Life are the *First Opportunities* they have had of that Faith, which must give Life to their Repentance? Should they say it, the many outward Calls they have had by God's blessed Word read and heard; the
many

many inward Calls of his Holy Spirit, moving them to their Duty; the many Checks of Conscience they have felt in their sinful and unchristian Practices, would be ready to contradict them to their Face.

And then, *for the Time*, (though they should be as near their End as the Thief was,) the case with *These* and with *Him* is very different.

No Hour is there now, but, in it, it may be said, That *Christ is risen from the Dead; Ascended into Heaven; hath given Gifts unto Men; and hath had all Power given unto him; and of these things we have had as great Proofs as can reasonably be desired: Which makes the Encouragements of turning unto Christ now, to be far greater, than in that sad and dismal State of his Passion on the Cross they were.*

Unless *These Men* could be put in the *same Circumstances* with the Thief; or in some not *altogether unlike* unto his; which cannot likely be, (while they shall thus from the means of Salvation, contrive for their Sins;) there will be small hopes for them in their late Repentance.

As for *Those*, who wrought in the Vineyard *no sooner than the Eleventh Hour*, and yet were rewarded alike with the Earliest, it is to be understood of those who were called no sooner, as is evident from *Matth. 20. 6. 7.* About *the Eleventh Hour he went out, and found others standing idle: And saith unto them, why stand you idle? They say unto him, because no Man hath Hired us; where by Hiring we are to understand Calling; which Calling may have respect either unto single Persons, or else Nations.*

Those Persons who have not heard of the Gospel; or have not had opportunities of understanding the Mysteries and Precepts of it, if, as soon as they are acquainted with them, and are invited to give their Names unto Christ, they shall sincerely do it;

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though it be in respect of their Lives, as the Eleventh
Hour to the Day, they shall not be refused.

And the like may be said of *Nations*, even at the
later end of the World; They shall be as dear in the
sight of God as those which have had earlier calls.

But the Receiving a Penny at the Ninth and Ele-
venth Hour is not to be understood of Them, who,
having been Baptized in their Infancy, and out-
wardly professing Christianity all along, have de-
ferred the practice of it till their last years.

For, they were (as I may so speak,) *Hired at the
first Hour*; and have *idled* it ever since. And their
Idleness is to be esteem'd much different from that of
the other. The other wrought not, because as yet
they had no Employment, nor place in the Vineyard;
But These had Employment and Place in it, and were
Unfaithful and Truant: And so may expect Pu-
nishment for their early and continued neglect,
while the other shall have a full Reward for their
late Labour; late indeed, yet as early as their
Call.

I will not say, but the late Obedience of those who
have been early called, may sometimes be sincere;
and, in Mercy, accepted by God. But the Scrip-
ture accounts of it as a thing not ordinary, and, as it
were, out of the usual course. Let us except that
one instance of the Thief on the Cross, which is to
be looked upon as a special and un-common Exam-
ple, (and therefore it stands by itself in the whole
Book of God :) And we shall find the Gospel to pro-
mise, in the usual Current of it, Eternal Rewards to
that Obedience only, which hath Perseverance joyn-
ed with it; and which *lasts unto, not begins at, the
end of Life.* *He that endureth unto the end shall be saved,*
and, *be thou faithful unto Death, and I will give thee
a Crown of Life.*

Such considerations as these, *Theophilus*, for the true Conception of Faith and Repentance, are requisite abroad, where so many either do not understand them rightly, or else, are willing, by false arguings, to make them serve for quite other than Christian Ends. And to *Us* they may be of use, at least so far, as to stir up our Grief, that the favour of our Lord in the Pardoning of Sins, should by any be abused to their greater Condemnation.

Theoph. They not only encline me to grieve for these miserable Men, who are so much their own Enemies; but do also give me a pleasure in conceiving these instances of Holy Writ (mentioned by you,) more fully, and to better advantage, than before I did. That knowledge being most, of all others, delightful to me, and satisfactory, which ariseth from the Laws of our Lord; or which is instrumental to the better understanding and practising of them.

Eubul. I am sure, These Laws of Faith and Repentance are well worthy our Love, as for the Excellence of their Effects, so for the Sacredness of their Matter. What an inward pleasure is it to conceive the Son of God, leaving the Glory of Heaven, to live upon Earth, and become one among the Sons of Men! How may it engage all the Powers of the Soul into a Divine Love, while we contemplate him in the Garden, sweating, as it were, great drops of Blood; and shedding afterwards the remainder thereof upon the Cross, amidst bitter pains for our Sake! This is, indeed, *in itself*, matter of the saddest kind; But, in respect of *Us*, what Wonder and Joy may it not excite! But then, if we by Faith look upon our Lord as he is Ascended into Heaven, to prepare Mansions for us; and as he shall come again in the Clouds with great Glory, that where He is, there We may be also; with what an Holy Splendour will

our understandings be entertain'd! Men are usually taken with great things; State, and Grandeur, though such in appearance only, draw the Eyes of the most; if really such they be, and do carry in them true Worth, (as here they eminently do,) they engage the Hearts also of the Wise and the Good.

Truly, our Faith, from the Sweet and Admirable matter it is fraught with, may *well work by Love*; Love, not only to God and Men, but even to the Law likewise by which it is enjoyn'd.

Such Majesty, as is included in our Faith, is not, I confess, to be found in Repentance; which consists chiefly in those Actions, that are Humble and Lowly. But how comely is it that an offending Soul should be humbled before an offended God; who, at such Submission and Sorrow, condescends, and accepts it with the greatest Love! A Face which hath so Holy a Sadness in it, and is wet with such Religious Tears, cannot but appear amiable: Yea, even to the Person who thus repenteth, there ariseth a secret Satisfaction in the midst of Sorrow; and it is none of the least Chearings to him, that he can grieve, in earnest, for his Sins against so gracious a Father.

And thus much, *Theophilus*, may suffice for the Consideration of the Laws themselves: And if (like Those, who walking over pleasant Fields and flowery Meads, as not content alone with Delights in the Way, will look back, and bring into one prospect, what successively, and by parts, did so much please them,) we shall turn our Eyes back upon these Laws, and behold them in the Bulk, which singly were so excellent, they will afford us a new Delight in the Review. There is none of them that is unsuty and disagreeing to another. They are not like that Face, whose Features by themselves were beauteous,
but

but united were uncomely; but they are such, as increase each others Lustre, and shew a Symmetry altogether Divine.

Theoph. It is so, *Eubulus.* When I consider the Laws which require Duties to God, I am the more in love with those which enjoyn my Behaviour towards Men. And when I weigh those that relate to others and myself, those towards God appear more advantageously to me; and I presently am excited to put them into practice, by reverencing, loving, and praising Him, who hath given such Laws unto us. Every particular Precept towards God, towards Men, towards myself, enkindles my Affection towards the rest; and they *Altogether*, do highly set off, and commend to my Love, every Particular.

And this our Love to the Divine Law is not like our Love in many other cases; which, when we recollect ourselves, and betake us to serious Thoughts, goes less. For the gaining Acceptance and esteem, no need is there of those Artifices that the Religious Institutions, among the Heathens, had; which from Hieroglyphicks, Fables, pompous and divers Superstitions, were served up rather to the Imaginative Faculty, than to the Understanding; and made to please not the Wise so much, as the Multitude. The Christian Laws fear not the most piercing and critical Eyes looking into them; They discovering the greatest Excellency to him, who hath the quickest Sight, and profoundest Judgment, joyn'd with an Upright Mind. And therefore our Love to them gets new Strength from Consideration, as having Right Reason for a Foundation; from which, like an House built upon a Rock, it may stand strongly, and not be cast down nor abated, for any Wind or Waters that may come against it.

Eubul. And truly, *Theophilus*, I find it a very great

Inducement for the raising our Love to these Laws, that They, of themselves, are grievous unto none; but, as the *Manna* was, are, in a sort, fitted to every Palate, unless to those that are grievously viated. Who is it, that ever had just cause to repent he had yielded Obedience to them? To whom, in the exercise, do they not bring Content and Satisfaction? If at any time they seem to create Trouble to a Man, it is rather because others transgress them, than because he himself observeth them: A thing which cannot be said of other Laws. Some of those which are profitable for the Community, are not so for some particular Men; who, for the publick Good, must be content to bear some private Inconveniencies; and some, advantageous to a few Persons, may not be so to a Nation in general.

Neither is there any thing, in its own Nature truly Good, which is *omitted* in their Injunctions; nor any thing, in its own Nature truly Evil, *forgotten* in their Prohibitions. Nor can there be any the least occasion (as in the wisest Human Constitutions sometimes there is,) for second Thoughts to add any thing unto, or alter any thing in them.

Yea, *Theophilus*, if we consider the Laws of our Lord, as they have relation only to *Civil Society*, and the Welfare of Men in this World, how far do they surpass those of the most noted Lawgivers!

We find not among his Laws any that look like that of *Solon*; which required that *All, in Publick Seditions, should run and joyn with the juster Part*; and ordered that, *if any did not so, he should for ever after be infamous*. For, when specious Pretences should make (as very often they do,) the Worst Side, to the Many, look fairer than that which is really the Better, and every one must of necessity take his Sword into his Hand; what a Flame would there,

there, hereby, be blown up in a Commonwealth, without any probable means left of quenching it, but by large Effusion of Blood ! So that *Plutarch* might well call this a singular and altogether New Law ; nor would the good Intent out-weigh the sad Consequences of it, had it upon occasion been faithfully put in practice.

He doth not institute, with *Lycurgus*, That Youth from Hardships of Education should be inured to Thieve for their Meat ; and should be commended, if they could do it cunningly, and without being found out : An ill Foundation surely for Honesty in greater Matters to be built upon, when they should be Men.

Neither doth he, with *Plato* in his *Republick*, take away a Fatherly Affection and Filial Duty, by indulging a Community of Women. Nor hath he any Law like that of *Aristotle* in his *Politicks*, which enjoyns That Lame and Deformed Children should be cast out, and not suffer'd to live.

And, as none of our Lords Laws are, in themselves, evil, or of bad consequence to Society, (as these now mention'd, and others that might be mentioned, are ;) so, if any Law of his shall, by Craft, and an ill Mind, be made injurious unto any, there are other Laws, which come in for a right bounding of such a Law ; and do allow no room for Guile and Fraud to work upon. If any shall, on purpose to our wrong, make use of the Law that requires, *If a Man smite us on one Cheek, to turn the other ;* or of that which bids us *Give to every one that asketh of us ;* and, of him, that taketh away our Goods, not to ask them again, (which Laws are, in a signal manner, designed for the establishing of Peace and Charity,) there are Laws that secure these to a Rational Practice, by telling these Men, That *Whatsoever they would, (i. e. in Right Reason would,) that Men should do unto them, they themselves*

selves should do the same to others : And by allowing ourselves to call the Serpents Wisdom to the Doves Innocence. Had there been such Provision made, by the Athenian Lawgiver, for the right limiting of his Law, which required the Cancelling of all Obligations and Debts past, That, which was well intended for the Relief of the Poor, had not proved so great an Oppression to others, as it did. The Fraud of many had been prevented ; and the Reputation of his own Justice had not been hurt.

Neither do our Saviours Laws fit us only for one State of Life, and render us altogether unapt to another ; as it is observed *Lycurgus's* did. They tended chiefly to make the *Lacedemonians* able for War ; and were so ill constituted for Peace, that when That People were free from Enemies abroad, they quickly declined at home ; not so much by the Breach of good Laws, as by the Want of them.

Indeed, the Laws of Christ do chiefly promote and establish Peace ; and do admirably provide against those Vices that are the attendants of Peace ; as Luxury, Sloth, Wantonness, and such like ; but yet, they no less instruct us to a right Deportment in Troublesom Times. And, moreover, when a Righteous Cause puts a Sword into a Christian's Hand, they teach him a Valour beyond that of other Men. A Valour which shall not owe itself to a Passion, that overwhelms consideration ; but which shall be firm, and well-grounded ; from an assured hope that God will either give success unto him here, or will reward him after Death.

Whence *Machiavel* surely had small reason to reflect upon the Christian Laws, as those, which, by teaching so much Meekness, and Patience, indisposed Men for great undertakings ; which, according to him, could not be accomplished without something of Cruelty. And he ill-affirm'd the Religions of Old

to fit Men better for mighty Actions, as accustoming them, by the Multitude of Sacrifices, to Blood and Destruction.

Indeed, if high Enterprizes did necessarily include a share of Inhumanity in them, what this Man says might the better be attended unto. But if those actions only are truly Noble, in which Courage is regulated by Reason, and adorned with Justice and Temperance, how false and disingenuous an Imputation he fastens on the Laws of Christianity, I need not say.

Theoph. The Laws of our Lord are indeed so constituted, as that they highly promote the Welfare of Society in this World, by establishing all those publick Virtues, without which the publick Good could not subsist. The more deplorable than it is, that any, who are Christians, should, from any words of our Lord or his Apostles, take up and nourish Opinions that tend to the disturbance of Government and Society. Two Opinions especially there are, that do it; which too many have been, and are, very ready to entertain, the one is,

That whatever Right a Man hath to what he enjoys, he hath it only by inward Holiness and Virtue: Or, in a Word, That all Dominion is founded in Grace; and this they infer from 1 Cor. 3. 31, 32. All are yours; whether the World, things present, or things to come, all are yours. And hence if they have an high Opinion of their own Sanctity, and a very low one of some other Mens, they can easily persuade themselves to take as their own, what the other have no just Title unto. By which means, Righteousness and Honesty, which are the great Establishers of Society, are, as to these Persons, destroyed; and consequently Society itself disturb'd.

The other Opinion (which for its illness may well be ranked with the now mention'd,) is this, *That*
Sovereign

Sovereign Princes may be Resisted, in the Defence and Maintenance of True Religion; as being that which is dearer than Life, and must by no means be with parted. And hence, (besides when Religion is really struck at,) if any Persons be disaffected to their Prince, it is easie to pretend, that he is no friend to Religion; that he cares not which way it goes; and, unless timely means be used, all will be lost: And so Wars and Fightings arise, and the publick welfare is miserably discomposed.

Eubul. Whether through *Weakness*, or an *Evil Heart*, these Opinions are embraced, I am sure, the Laws of our Lord are no way chargeable with them.

If we look upon the Apostle's Words, from which the former Opinion is taken, to wit, *All things are yours*; there are these things indeed, which much make for the Honour, as well as the Benefit of Pious Men. All things are theirs, so, as that with a Christian Liberty they may use them, without esteeming any of them unclean. All things are theirs, after such a manner, as that if they should absolutely stand in need of them, God would order them, by his Almighty Power, for their Service. Lastly, all things are so theirs, that, in probability God would not suffer his Sun to shine, nor his Rain to fall on the Evil, were there not Good Men in the World to value his Providence and Love. But then this is the whole, that those Words will bear. To say, that God hath given the Saints the Right of Possession, and authorized them to Ingross all the World to themselves, is notoriously false. For, as the Oeconomy of the World now stands, God doth dispose of the possession of things, in those ways, which all Civil Nations do give consent unto, or the particular Laws of Nations allow of; whether they be Inheritances by Descent; or the Gift of others to us;
or

or Purchased by our Money ; or Acquired by our Labour : Where any of these are, there is a Right, as being God's Gifts to us by those Methods ; and the depriving us of them by Fraud or Force, would be down-right Injustice.

Add to this, that the Right of Possession, in these ways, is *discernable* and *certain*, while the founding it in Grace and Holiness gives no *sure Light unto us at all*. For how shall we know, who are the Good ? We see Impiety can wear as good a Face sometimes as the truest Virtue ; and Mens Hypocrisie may cheat not only others by a specious shew, but even themselves too. There is nothing (I may say,) more in the dark than true Goodness ; we cannot be infallible in pronouncing it in another, because his Heart and Thoughts, in which it peculiarly resides, cannot be seen by us : And our own Hearts are so deceitful, that they oftentimes no less lie hid to ourselves, than they do to others. And therefore, if Grace and Holiness, which they will have to be the Ground of Dominion and Possession, is so uncertain, That Right, which from those is so much talk'd of, must needs be as uncertain.

But suppose, that such and such should be known undoubtedly to be Religious and Gracious Persons ; I would ask, Have they all the same Right to enjoy every thing, or have they not ? If they have, there will this absurdity follow, *viz.* That every one cannot at the same time use what every one hath a Right unto ; and Quarrels may arise, who shall have the Precedence in them. If they have not all the same Right, how comes equal Grace in many, to give an unequal Title ? A narrower to one than to another ? Or, if it shall evidently prove, (as it evidently will,) that Human Laws or Customs, and not Grace, do make a Distinction of Property, why should some others, whom those Laws or Customs have

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have by no means condemned, be denied the benefit of Property from them?

Further yet, God may possibly bestow these outward good things upon a wicked Man, as *Encouragements* to a better course of Life: Sometimes he may throw them upon him as a *Scourge*; and sometimes he may think good to *reward* with the Blessings of the Earth, *some good Actions in him*; when yet his Crimes will not suffer him to have hereafter a place in Heaven. And in which of all these cases, have not wicked Men a Right to their Estates from God, as well as from Men? Will any good Man think, that he hath any Title to those outward Possessions, which God hath conferr'd to draw Men unto Virtue? Or will he arrogate to himself as Blessings what God hath made Curses to others? Or lastly, shall the good things which God hath given, as Rewards for some commendable Actions, be thought much of, envied, and claimed, when, it may be, they are all the Recompences which ever shall be given? And what wicked Man is there to whom his Estate may not belong in one of these ways? And surely to deprive him of it upon the account of Grace in ourselves, or Corrupt Nature in him, would be Impiety and Presumption towards God, and Injustice and Dishonesty towards Man. So unreasonable, and contrary to the Law of Righteousness is this first Opinion.

And is it, *Theophilus*, any otherwise with the second? I do not know any Laws in the New Testament, that are more express and direct than those against the Resisting of Sovereign Princes: Let every Soul be subject to the Higher Powers; for there is no Power but of God: Whosoever resisteth the Power, resisteth the Ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves Damnation, Rom. 13. And, were it that upon the account of Religion we might resist,

resist, why should the Holy Ghost so peremptorily forbid Resistance under an Emperour, who he certainly knew would be a grievous Persecutor of the Gospel?

But if we look at the first progress of Christianity into the World, the case will be evident. The Gospel was not forcibly to enter the Territories of any Prince; but, by its own Excellence, accompanied with cogent Arguments, and humble Persuasions, was to have admittance. For indeed it was against the Nature of that which consisteth chiefly in Love, to thrust itself upon the World by Acts of Hostility and Violence. And if so, can we reasonably think, that, when it is admitted, it is to maintain itself by the Sword, against those, through whose Favour and Kindness it was first received? This would be to make it by continuance to put on quite a different Nature from what it primarily had. And, were it to be such, Princes could the less be blamed, if they should be scrupulous in giving within their Dominions a place to that, which, at last, might not allow a place to themselves there. But surely Christ's Kingdom, in its proper Nature, is *as little of this World as ever it was*, and so his Servants are *as little to fight now*, as they were, when *He was upon the Earth*.

It is a very remarkable place in St. Peter, 2 Epist. 2. 10, 11. where it is said, That God will chiefly reserve those unto the Day of Judgment, who are not afraid to speak evil of Dignities: And that the holy Angels, which are greater in Power and Might, bring not railing Accusations against them; which must needs be understood of evil Princes: For what occasion may there seem for railing Accusations against those Princes, that are Pious and Good? Now, if the blessed Angels, with respect to God's Ordinance in them, will speak with a kind of Heavenly Modesty and Deference concerning

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concerning them, is it lawful for us, think we, not only to let loose our Tongues in a bitter and inveighing manner, but to lift up our Hands in Treasons and Rebellions against them? And if those shall be *reserved unto the Great Day*, for more than ordinary Damnation, who do only *speake evil* of Dignities, what Flames will be thought hot enough for those, who dare with Swords make *Resistance*?

Our Religion is justly *more dear* unto us than *our Lives*; but that it is so, is to be shewn by the Obedience which it enjoyns, rather than by the Force which it condemns. For to assert the Gospel by breaking the Precepts of it, is the being true to it in the ways of Falseness; which is no better than bringing the Devils Aid into the Cause of God.

Theoph. Allow me yet, *Eubulus*, to ask thus much, Must we sit still and suffer?

Eubul. Rather *stand we still*, *Theophilus*, and see the *Salvation of the Lord*. He shall not be the less safe, who contains himself in those bounds which God hath appointed him: And to seek further would be to find a Sin and a Blot, rather than a Deliverance. He, who by his Wisdom and Goodness hath sent our Religion into the World, hath Power enough to preserve it as he himself pleaseth. And they who say, that no security is left to the Christian Religion, if the resisting the Higher Powers, upon the account thereof, be denied, have no strength in what they say, unless they can remove God and his Providence out of the World; *Who will not suffer the Gates of Hell to prevail against his Church*. Where there shall be a faithful serving of him, and the Arms of the Church, *Prayers and Tears*, shall be *well managed*, we need not fear, but we shall be safe unde the *Protection of the Almighty*.

So sweetly peaceable, *Theophilus*, are the Laws of Christ, and so utterly averse from whatever shall destroy

destroy the Welfare either of Princes or Subjects: Particularly from the Opinions we have been speaking to; which their Owners may be ashamed of, as being very great Wrongs to the Name of Christianity.

Theoph. God grant they may be honestly ashamed of them; so will there be more upright Neighbours, and more loyal Subjects.

Eubul. One thing, *Theophilus*, is proper to these Laws alone; They extend even to the Heart and Thoughts, ordering and correcting those inward Powers and Faculties, which the Eye and Cognizance of Men cannot reach unto: That, what the best among Men appear to be outwardly, they are no less bound to be within. Insomuch that were every Breast transparent, (as that Noble Roman wish'd his to be,) through which the secretest Motions of the Thoughts might be seen, the fairest outside would be but mean in comparison of that excellent Order, and exact Harmony, which, from the right Observance of these Laws, would be there discerned.

But it is time, *Theophilus*, to wish you a Good-Night; and what remains we will reserve till the Morrow's Evening.

Theoph. Mine Ears have been all along wholly yours, *Eubulus*; and mine Appetite is so far from being appeased by hearing, that it is very much quickned. I will only wish, That your Sleep may be as refreshing to you, as your Discourse hath been to me.

DISCOURSE the Fourth.

The Contents.

General Motives relating to these Laws altogether. To the Conscionable Observance of them Eternal Rewards are promised; yet Earthly ones are not excluded. For the securing of our Obedience Eternal Punishments are threatned after Death to the neglect of these Laws. The Constituting such Punishments is no more than what is meet to be done. Stronger Assistances are afforded for the Performance of these Laws than under Moses there were. Most Loving Invitations and Affectionate Expressions are joyned with them. We have no reason to complain, that there are not now under the Gospel-Law, those Visible Expressions of Gods Power and Presence, as under the Old Law there were. Particular Motives relating to these Laws singly and apart: Such as are wholly peculiar to the Gospel, or else are there more clearly and convincingly urged than ever they were before. It is impossible, there should be any True Happiness without these Laws. From the inward Excellence of them, and those admirable

and of Disobedience thereunto. 115

mirable Motives annexed to them, there is a substantial Proof of their Divinity and Truth. No Man hath ever deserved to be so much honoured among Men as our Lord hath done. Those who faithfully give up their Names unto him, have the Precedence of all others. How it comes to pass, that since the Law is so good, Assistances so great, and Motives so taking, there should be so many Disobedient Ones.

T H E O P H I L U S.

YOU are once more well met, *Eubulus*! Though, even after I parted with you last Night, I was not altogether absent from you. For so much had you engaged my waking Thoughts, that by them my Dreams were also made yours: I was your Auditor in my Sleep, and (I cannot but still think upon it,) such a strange Pleasure did there seize me from a sense of the Divine Law, as, while awake, I never yet felt.

E U B U L U S.

I Think such a Dream not unfit to be reckoned among your Blessings. And though God, in these Days, makes not such use of Dreams as in times of old he did; yet the affirming that he hath now so wholly forsaken them, as that they are altogether to be excluded from his Favour, and esteem'd, all alike, merely as Casual or Natural Things, is,

116 *The True Nature of the Divine Law,*

I dare say, not a Virtue, especially, where Men by Religious Thoughts do make way for his Comforts in the Night; and in the Morning are ready to entertain them with thankfulness.

I remember that in *Plutarch* it is said, *A Man's progress in Virtue may be perceived from his Dreams*, if in them he approves of no ill thing, and is inclined to Righteous Deeds; his Imaginative Faculty being (as it were) season'd by right Reason, and having its Impress upon it. And, I hope, you may, without Extravagance or Error, infer something of Rational Satisfaction from your Dream.

Theoph. You would, I see, put me in the way to do it: And I have so far a Satisfaction from my Dream, that I am glad I told it you, for the Remarks you have made upon it.

But let not Dreams put us by the Business of our Walk; which is the shewing the Motives which are annexed unto the Divine Law for the securing of our Obedience.

Eubul. Well then, *Theophilus*, we will go on.

These Motives are either such as are more General, relating to the Divine Laws altogether; or more Particular, relating to them singly, and apart.

The more General Motives are these:

1. Their having *Eternal Rewards* promised to the Conscionable Observance of them; and *Eternal Punishments* threatened to wilful Disobedience.

2. Their having *stronger Assistances* afforded for the Performance of them, than under the Old Law there were.

3. Their having such *Loving Exhortations*, and affectionate Expressions of Kindness joined unto them.

1. Their having *Eternal Rewards* promised to the Conscionable Observance of them, &c.

That

That which is put in the Front of the Decalogue, (*I am the Lord thy God, that brought thee out of the Land of Egypt, out of the House of Bondage,*) was a great Motive for the Loving of those Laws. But how low is *That*, in Comparison of *This*; *I* am he that prepare *Eternal Mansions* for you in the *Heavens*; That reserve for you an *Inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, which fadeth not away*; *A Crown which withereth not*? And hence our Lord is called the *Prince of Life*, *Acts 3. 15*. Not only because he *was dead*, and *is alive*, and for ever will live; but also because he was Author of *Eternal Life*, and made it the *Reward of Obedience* to his Laws.

And when our Lord shall purchase our poor Obedience at so excessive a Value, as the giving of Heaven and the *Glory* thereof, (when he might justly command more *Rigorous Services*, without any *Rewards* further than merely our having of *Life*, and being preserved while we do them,) what a mighty motive is it for Obedience to these Laws, and for our *Love* to them also!

Mean is the *being Blessed in the City and in the Field*; in respect of the *Happiness* that *Eye hath not seen*, nor *Ear heard*, and that hath not entered into the *Heart of Man to conceive*. To have *Life Eternal*, and all *Joys* attending it, for that with *Improved Souls*, and *Spiritual Bodies*, we cannot wish them to be greater, nor fear them to be less; *Joys*, must suitably following a *Vertuous Life*: and so refin'd and sacred that they are worthy of an *Immortality*, for the being possess'd; how much doth it surpass a *Life's* being long in an *Earthly Canaan*, and those more common and sensible *Blessings* that were given to it?

Though yet these *Earthly Rewards* are not wholly excluded by the *Heavenly* neither; but when they shall be expedient for us, we shall have them. *Eter-*

nal Blessings under the Gospel, do assure us of Temporal, so far forth as they shall be for our Good; as Temporal, under the Mosaick Law, did prefigure Eternal ones that should follow. *For he that spared not his own Son but gave him for us all, How shall he not in Him freely give us all things?*

And herein, upon much better ground are we placed than Those were, who made *Virtue to be its own Reward*, and would have Men, even in the midst of Torments, though there were no hope of an Alleviation, to think that they had a sufficiency of Happiness from it alone. This was high and magnificent Talk indeed; and if (secure from ever being put into Practice,) it might have rested in Speculation only, Virtue would not have been discredited thereby. But small Comfort it carried with it, when Pains and Troubles were actually to be undergone. And a Man, on the Rack, might almost be thought not un-wise, if for the obtaining of ease he would let go such an Happiness.

For more commended, surely, is the observance of the Laws of Christ, (which includeth in it all sorts of Virtue.) Our Obedience is indeed to be maintain'd, if occasion there were, even to the loss of all Earthly Enjoyments; but then, it often in this World hath Plenty and Honour as its Attendants and Reward; Or, if it so shall be, that God in his Wisdom shall suffer it on every Hand to be encompass'd with Afflictions, it yet hath something to sustain it, besides the meer reflecting upon itself; to wit, the assurance, that however its condition, at the present, be strait and difficult, it will not always be so. God can, and it may be, he will, give Relaxation and Ease here; but if this he shall not do, there shall certainly after Death be Joys sufficient; when these short Troubles shall be abundantly made up by an Happiness which never shall have an end. And this

this may afford a firm support to Virtue, and Administer a Cheerfulness even in the *Valley of the Shadow of Death*.

Who is it then that can refuse Obedience to the Laws of our Lord, when he thus brings *Life and Immortality to Light*, and promiseth them as Rewards to our Obedience? And if the Excellency of the Laws themselves will not prevail upon the Man for his Love, how can he stand out against the Happiness that attendeth them?

Those Christians, that endeavour to put far from them *this Happiness*, by esteeming the Obedience to be *Low and Mercenary*, which hath respect to a Reward, I very much pity; as being such, who, through *sad error*, deny to themselves the greatest comfort of their Life; but very much *blame* them also, in that, as much as in them lies, they devalue the Holy Laws of their Inestimable Ornament; and would take from us the Joy that is set before us; which was the great support to our Lord, in his *enduring the Cross*, and *despising the Shame*, and so may justly be an Encouragement to Us in the doing of his Will: Especially, since, by reason of our Weakness and Imperfection, we have little reason to let go what may so strongly excite us unto, and so sweetly confirm us in, our Duty.

But, *Theophilus*, for the further securing of Obedience to these Laws, there are *Eternal Punishments* after Death, threatened to the Disobedient. It is better, saith our Lord, to enter into Life Maimed, than having two Hands to go into Hell, into the Fire that never shall be quenched: Where their Worm dieth not, and where their Fire is not quenched. There being a Worm to Gnaw the Man, declareth that there is Torment; and there being a Worm not failing nor dying, declareth the perpetuity of the Torment; there being a Fire to burn, denoteth pain; and there being a Fire not

quenchable, (for so the Words $\alpha\beta\epsilon\rho\nu\alpha\iota$ and $\pi\upsilon\rho\iota\varsigma$ $\alpha\sigma\beta\epsilon\sigma\upsilon$ signifie,) denoteth an *Everlasting Duration* of that pain.

In like manner are we to understand those Words of St. Matthew, Chap. 25. 46. *They shall go into Everlasting Punishment; i. e. They shall go into that which shall never cease, nor have end.* The Law of Old did indeed, in its strictest constitution, affix a *Curse* (to wit, Death,) upon every one that continued not in all things *Written therein to do them.* But yet that Rigour was so far Mitigated, that, when less Punishments were allowed for some Sins, *Lustings*, though still forbidden, might seem to have no Penalty at all imposed; or else were thought to be wip'd off in Course, by the Daily Sacrifices. Hereupon it was that the Jews, if they could abstain from outward Miscarriages, were little concerned for inward *Re-titude*; a freedom from Punishment rendring the Law of no weight with them.

But it is not so in the Laws of our Lord. They cannot be esteem'd to lose their efficacy for want of Punishment annexed. *Whosoever shall break one of these least Commands, and shall teach Men so, shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven: i. e. He shall have no place in it; shall be despised and rejected by God in the Day of Judgment.* Even the *Looking upon a Woman to lust after her*; and the being *Angry with a Brother without a Cause*, are esteemed, by our Lawgiver, in the same rank with *Adultery and Murder*, and shall be obnoxious to the same kind of Punishment with them. Which is well signified by the words in St. Matth. 5. 22. $\epsilon\rho\chi\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ $\tau\eta\varsigma$ $\kappa\epsilon\tau\epsilon\iota$, *He shall be liable to the Judgment, (viz. The Court of the Twenty Three Elders;)* where the Punishment was Capital, though in a more mild manner than in the Council, (*viz. of the Sanhedrim,*) or in the *Vally of Hinnam*, denoted there, by the Expression

pression of *Hell-fire*. And therefore the least Punishment hereafter, being such as answers to Death here, importeth no less than Death Eternal, though a lesser degree thereof, than what shall be inflicted upon greater Sins.

Theoph. But can this Motive be said any way to prevail for our Love to these Laws? It may excite indeed a *Dread*, but not likely our Love.

Eubul. Yet, *Theophilus*, let things be seriously considered, and even from *This Motive*, how dreadful soever it may, at first view, appear, there will be reason to love these Laws.

For, the Constituting such Punishments is no more than what is meet to be done. Where the Laws are in themselves so every way good, and where there are Eternal Rewards promised to the Observance of them; you will say, when they are disobey'd, that it is but fit there should be Penalties inflicted; and these Penalties such as shall be answerable to the Offences committed.

Now the greatness of the Offences is to be gathered from the exceeding Riches of Gods Bounty, viz. Everlasting Rewards, held out unto Men, on Terms so excellent, and to Rational Natures so truly agreeable. If These shall be despised, and cast behind their backs, the Sin is of a very great height; and what Punishment will so rightly fute it, as the contrary to that Eternal Happiness, which they have rejected, viz. Eternal Misery?

The measure of Gods Justice is to these Men not greater than the abundant Goodness was, which they so ungratefully refused. They shall not be thrown deeper in Hell, than by the Will of God they might have been raised in Heaven. Nor shall they continue longer in Punishments, than they should have done in Joys.

Now these things, in Speculation, must be acknowledged to carry in them a *duness of proportion*, and to be therefore *beknful*; as indeed every thing in God and in his Actings, is; even his *Justice* no less than his *Mercy*. Only we are weak and sinful, and so cannot over quickly discern it: But to impartial Consideration it will at length shew itself so to be.

But that which comes more near us, and may more move our Love, is this, *viz.*

That the *Intent* of threatening these Punishments is *primarily*, not that they should be *born*, but that they should be *escaped*.

Self-preservation is a thing so natural unto Men, that the fears of losing their Welfare and Being, shall have a more quick touch upon them than any thing else. God therefore hath added this Motive of Fear, that it may be a spur to quicken us, when, by the Corruption of Nature, other Arguments are rendred less prevalent.

These Punishments shall indeed be undergone by refractory Sinners; For they have, as much as in them lies, gone about to dissolve utterly the Community which is made up between God the Legislator, and Men his People, by infringing the Authority of the Divine Laws, and the Dignity of Him who is to see that they be observed. But it is only by such as These, that these Punishments shall be undergone. To others they are chiefly a *Motive* to Obedience; and are further, only as a *reserve*, when all other means have proved ineffectual.

The case in respect of Punishments is much different betwixt *our* Lawgiver, and Lawgivers *on Earth*. Some of *These* are more forward to punish than to reward, because Punishments do oftentimes increase their Treasuries, and Rewards diminish them. But our Lord is no way profited by the punishment

nishment of any; neither in the rewarding them is his Abundance extenuated. Much *delight* he takes in the *Life* of Men; but he hath given us the greatest Assurances, that he hath *no pleasure* in the *death* of Sinners. His threatening therefore to punish them, is, that they may not be punished. And truly, though we may dread the Effects of God's Justice, yet when he thereby shall awaken our Hearts that we may be the more *secured unto Happiness*, as it may very much excite *our Obedience*, so may it also *our Love* to God's Law; even upon the account of threatening Eternal Punishments.

Theoph. I see out of the *Eater* there may be *Meat*, and out of the *Strong*, *Sweetness*. What, to common view, is at the greatest distance from Love, is (nearer than what I could think,) an Engagement thereof to the Divine Law.

Eubul. Another Motive for the securing of Obedience to the Laws of Christ, is, their having *stronger Assistances* afforded for the Performance of them, than under the Old Law there were.

The Holy Spirit will always joyu with our sincere Endeavours, and will *help our Infirmities*. And hereupon the Gospel, and all the Laws of Jesus Christ, are, in Holy Writ, called *Spirit*, by reason of the Grace of God's Spirit preventing, and enabling us in the doing of them, and are therein put in opposition to the *Mosaick Law*, which is term'd the *Letter*. Thus is it 2 Cor. 3. 6. *God hath fitted us to be Ministers of the New Testament, not of the Letter, but of the Spirit*; i. e. not of the Old Law, but of the *Evangelical*; for the *Letter killeth*, but the *Spirit giveth Life*; i. e. The Spirit with its Assistances in this Law enables us to perform it, and in so doing to obtain Life. Hence it is that the Apostle (as some very Learned Persons interpret him,) reckons more to the *Constitution of a Christian*, than of
other

other Men, joyning Spirit to Soul and Body, and giving that the precedence of the other two. I pray God your whole Spirit, Soul and Body, may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus, 2 Thess. 5.23. Not that This is a Substance distinct from the Soul and Body; but a Principle we may call it, which is wrought within us by the Blessed Spirit, and is well expressed by the *καὶ ἡ κτίσις* of St. Paul, the New Creation, and the *θεῖα φύσις* of St. Peter, the Divine Nature; whereby we are enabled to act those things which meerly by our Natural Powers we cannot reach unto. And what is it that we cannot do, if our Lord, through the Blessed Spirit, will lend us an Hand in the doing it? I can do, saith St. Paul, all things through Christ that strengtheneth me; and so may every good Christian say as well as he: Which is a very great Encouragement to love these Laws, in that they bring their Helps, as well as their Rewards along with them.

Theoph. What you say, *Eubulus*, might be a great Encouragement to love these Laws, were these Assistances such as you speak them to be. But, alas, our Work seems to be little the less for them. We must labour, fight, and strive; and when we have done all which we are able, we can see much of the Weakness of Men, but little of the Strength of God; and nothing that appears either answerable to the Title of Spirit, which is given to these Laws, by reason (as you say,) of God's Holy Spirit preventing and enabling us in our Obedience; or expressive of the Constitution of a Christian, in which Spirit is added to Soul and Body.

Eubul. I hope, *Theophilus*, you do not think that the Assistances of the Holy Spirit are such things as put by our Endeavours, and nourish our Sloth. They are Assistances, and so they do suppose that we ourselves should do something. For were all to be per-
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formed by the Holy Spirit, without the intervention of our Actions, we must call them by some other Name, for they could not properly be termed *Assistances*. And therefore it is, that what our Lord doth *accomplish* for us by his *Grace* through the Holy Ghost, he *enjoyneth* us by his *Command* to do, as of our own *Power*. He *worketh in us to will and to do*; but yet *we are to work out our own Salvation*. He *strengtheneth us*, but *we are to strive*; The *Victory* is from *Him*, but the *Fighting* must be *ours*. • And so, it is very true what you said, *viz.* That our Work seems not to be the *less* to us for the *Assistances* which he gives; we must be altogether as industrious, and earnest, as if the whole were to be done by ourselves, and nothing at all by Him.

But because, when we have done all which we are able to do, we can see much of Human Weakness in our Actions, and but little of Divine Strength, shall we therefore conclude that the *Assistances* of the Spirit have been none, or, at most, very mean, and nothing worthy of the Character which is given them? What, *Theophilus*, if the *Holy Spirit* in his aiding us, will so comply with the Natural Powers of our Souls, that we cannot discern *his* Actings from our own? What if he, in a silent and gentle manner, shall suggest things to our Understandings, shall secretly sway our Wills, and move our Affections really, but yet imperceivably unto us? Let us not, because he *draws us with the Cords of a Man*, say that we are not drawn at all. If, when we have done our best we seem to ourselves to be weak, and to have done far less than we should have done, it possibly is none of the least Aids of the Spirit, that we can discern our own weakness, and desire to please God, even beyond our Abilities. *His Grace* can be, and it this way is, very properly, *made perfect in our Weakness*. I dare be bold to say, that he is not prompted from above,

above, who shall deny that there are Divine Assistances, because there is not a Demonstration to the Soul that there are such. Nay, it may seem expedient that ordinarily they should be secret and imperceptible: For, should they commonly be otherwise, Men would be too apt to *rely upon* them; and thereby *do less* themselves, because they see what their *Aids* are. Or, it may be, they would *grow conceited* and abuse the helps of Gods Holy Spirit to the overthrow of the Excellent Grace of Humility. Out of Mercy therefore the *Blessed Spirit* may Insensibly give his Aids unto Men; that so, by a constancy in their endeavours, they at last may attain unto a greater perfection of all Graces, and may the surer enjoy his Love by their Humility.

Theoph. But, *Eubulus*, if the Holy Spirit should in his Assistances move upon the Soul in this insensible way, how could it be known that there were any *Assistances* at all? And if it could not be known, where would the *Excellency* of these Laws be, from such a Motive as we are uncertain of?

Eubul. There, would be certainty enough of it from the Scriptures Revealing that such Assistances there are, although we should not know the manner of them; nor the times in which they are afforded.

But yet, *Theophilus*, these Spiritual Aids are not always indiscernible neither. They oftentimes are seen by their effects, though in their actings they were unperceiv'd. And when a Mans Life is changed, and he, that heretofore was Dissolute and Wicked, is now become Sober and Religious; Or, when, in a constant course of Piety and Devotion, he, from his Childhood hath escaped the *enticements of Satan*, and *pollutions of the World*, we (and he himself also,) though those Assistances have not been discerned, may no less know, that the *Holy Spirit* hath been present

sent with him, than we know that there is a *Wind* when we *hear the Sound thereof*, though we *see not whence it cometh nor whither it goeth*. And yet further, *Theophilus*, after faithful Obedience to the more Silent and Gentle Motions of the Holy Spirit, it is not altogether unusual to have inward and sacred Joys darted into the Soul; which, as they are Rewards for Fidelity in the years past, so are they likewise more sensible Helps for higher degrees of Piety in the years to come; and prelibations of that unspeakable Joy which Holy Men shall be filled with hereafter in Heaven. If there be not such discernible Assistances more frequent in the World, it is, either because Men do not duly close with the Holy Spirit in his Ordinary and Secret Aids; or because they indulge a Sad and Melancholy Temper, which shuts them out of the Soul; or, because God sees them not requisite for a great many Persons. But yet the Laws of our Lord may notwithstanding be truly said to have more strong Assistances afforded, than under the Old Law there were; and deservedly to be entitled so much to *the Spirit*, from the Secret Helps which the *Holy Spirit* offers unto all that are willing to obey.

Theoph. I was willing to urge you something the more upon this Head, because the *Holy Spirit* is signally the Honour of the Evangelical Laws; and because many are forward to talk slightly of his Assistances, upon the account that they are not Visible to the Eye, nor gross enough to be touch'd.

Eubul. I heartily pity the State of these Men, since none are more surely in the way to Misery, than those that laugh at the Aids to Happiness; especially when held out by a Divine Hand.

But let us go to the *Third and last Motive* for the securing of Obedience to these Laws; which is, their

their *having such Loving Invitations and Affectionate Expressions of Kindness joyn'd with them.*

Come unto me (saith our Lord,) *all ye that Labour and are heavy Laden, and I will give you rest.* Where, by those that *Labour and are heavy Laden*, I suppose, that They are not only to be understood, who perceive the burden of their Sins, and see the necessity of Grace from their Misdoings. Our Lord here calls Men not only to Comfort but also to Teach and Instruct them; that they may come to an Acknowledgment of their Sins; which in their own Nature are a Weight and Burden; although they be not yet perceived so to be. After the manner of those who, *Rev. 3. 17. were Wretched and Miserable, and Poor and Blind and Naked*; when they felt no such thing.

So that all Men here are called by Christ; whether they be such as think themselves to be miserable, or such as do not. That by the One the Misery which they, in good sort, perceive, may be avoided; and from the Other, the Misery which they are under, though they see it not, may by good Instructions be removed; and they brought into those Paths which will give them a true rest from Sin at the present; and will bring them into Everlasting Rest hereafter.

And how persuasive is that of *St. Paul? We as Ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christs stead be you reconciled unto God, i. e. be you Obedient to his Laws, and thereby reconcile yourselves unto him, who by Disobedience were his Enemies.* And how strangely may this prevail for Love to God's Law, when his Commands, of themselves Righteous and Gentle, are yet further softned by kind Invitations and Passionate Beseechings!

These are, *Theophilus*, the *general Motives* relating to all the *Divine Laws* together, and if we will
not

not be obstinate, nor lay aside our Understandings, with what pleasing Strengths will they come upon our Souls, and sway them into Love and Obedience !

Theoph. But methinks, *Eubulus*, there is the absence of some things in them, which were a great Ornament to the Law of *Moses*, and, as it may seem, would be no less so to That of our Lord : *viz.* Those Visible Expressions (which I remember you mention'd in your first Walk,) of God's *Power and Presence*, in the *Urim and Thummim* ; in *Oracles from the Ark* ; in the *wondrous Activeness of the sacred Fire* ; in the *Cloud filling the Temple* ; and also in *Miraculous Deliverances and Revenges*. These, you said, kept the love of Gods Laws awake, that it sunk not into Carelessness and Irreverence. Is there not as *much need* of these things, or such as these, now ? And would they not have been meet to accompany the *Evangelical Motives* you instanced in ?

Eubul. These were things which were adapted for that State, where Men were to be wrought upon chiefly by means that could be seen and felt, and were, as yet, not so fit for a more spiritual Dispensation. But now, when Heavenly Mysteries and Rewards are so fully revealed, it would be our shame, if, not satisfied with them, we should still be looking after outward and sensible Manifestations. And I speak a truth when I say, That God's being present with us in a spiritual manner, is more suitable to his Nature, which is incorporeal, than his appearing in a Cloud, or by other visible or audible Ways, in the Jewish Temple, was. And it is also a more perfect Way than was that other. *That* being more to the outward sense, and the weaker part of Man ; *This* more to the Soul, which is his Excellence : *That* being exercised through visible things ; *This* through the Holy Spirit who is invi-

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sible,

fible, and infinitely surpasseth them. Neither is there wanting what may keep our Love from Drowziness, as much, or more, than what under the Old Law there did: *The Word of God is sharper than a two-edged Sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the Joints and Marrow*; and the Holy Spirit, like a Refiner's Fire, will give a quickness unto, and keep up vigour in, our Love.

But suppose, *Theophilus*, there should be visible and continued Manifestations of the Divine Presence, as of old there were: In tract of time they would be esteem'd little different from the effects of Nature; and would prevail with Men no more than the Course of the Sun and Moon, and the Growth of Trees and Herbs; which, from their commonness, make small Impressions upon the less knowing, and immoral sort of Men. And, it may be, these more open Expressions of his Power and Presence, which God Almighty gave under the first Temple, he therefore denied under the second, because their every-days being seen, made them so little taken notice of, that they thereby, in great measure, lost their End.

But if you would have the Divine Power to be, now and then, in extraordinary Concerns, exerted beyond the common road of Nature, (as I cannot say, but sometimes it now is, though very rarely,) neither would this possibly have the effect you think of. We live in a curious and uncrediting World, and those, whom these things should most work upon, would, if far distant, not believe that there were such things: If they should be so near as to see them, they would be forward to solve such Acts by Natural Reasons, and thereby render them fruitless to themselves. However it be, we in general may say, That God in these later Ages of the World, chuseth to manifest himself more by the
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exercise of his Wisdom, than by the open Effects of his Power; herein dealing with Men according to their own way, Policy and Contrivance being that which almost every one affecteth. And from the more quiet and wise disposal of things now, God's Hand, by religious and considering Men, may as truly be acknowledged, as when his Methods were more discernable by the Eye.

Therefore, since the Divine Laws, as now they are settled, are abundantly fitted for the prevailing upon sober and docible Minds; and those visible effects of God's Power would not, in all likelihood, sway with those who are of a contrary Disposition; and his secret way of acting is the choice of his Providence, to confound and bring under the evil Policies of Men, in a suitable and agreeing manner, we have no reason to complain, as if there were a want of those visible Expressions of his Power and Presence which he heretofore afforded; and we are very unjust, if we prefer some Motives belonging to the Law of old, before those which appertain to the Divine Law now.

Theoph. Your Reply hath satisfied me, and made a fair way for me to intreat your proceeding to those Motives, which you said there were to every particular Law apart by itself.

Eubul. They deserve not to be passed over without notice. For they are so apposite, so sweet and strong, that nothing can be more: And such as are either wholly peculiar to the Gospel, or else are there more clearly and convincingly urged.

Would it not be long I might at large instance in those Laws which respect God immediately, other Men, and ourselves; but I will so far presume as briefly to do it.

Can any thing more stir up the Duty of Love and Gratitude to God, than that he is so much more

our Father by Redemption, than he was by Creation, by how much the *shedding of the Blood of God* transcends the *speaking of a Word*? Can a Reverential Fear be more awakened by any thing, than by our being acquainted that he *is able to destroy both Body and Soul in Hell*; and by our being bid to *fear him* with a redoubled Precept, *Fear him, I say unto you, Fear him.*

And then for Duties to others, in the Relation of Subjects to a Prince; of Priest and People; of Husbands and Wives; of Parents and Children; of Masters and Servants; and of Neighbours one to another.

Nothing can possibly prevail more upon Rational Men, for Obedience to Princes, than that they are ἀγιοὶ καὶ δάσυνται Θεῷ, Sacred Ministers of God. That *Damnation shall be received if resistance be made*: And that the Conscience within is to be preferr'd before the Fear of Wrath without. And surely, Princes may well embrace the Name, and maintain the Practice of Christianity, which thus secures them of the Hands and Hearts of their Subjects.

What stronger Motives can there be for Peoples Respect and Love to their Ministers, than that they are Stewards of the Mysteries of God, upon their account? That in Christs stead they beseech them to be reconciled unto God? And that they are set apart for this very thing; to wit, the promoting the welfare of their Souls? and how prevalent such Motives have been, we may learn from the Galatians carriage towards St. Paul; who would, if possible, have plucked out their own Eyes, and given them unto him.

Neither are the Duties of Pastors urged with less Weight. The Church's being purchased by the Blood of God is the argument for their Feeding it; and they are charged before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall Judge the Quick and the Dead, to do it. The consideration of which, what Heart would it not affect?

For *Mutual Love and Delight* between Those whom *Wedlock hath joyn'd*, it is an highly sacred Motive, That Marriage is so far honour'd as to become *Mysterious*, in the Signification of *Christ the Bridegroom*, and the *Church his Sponse*; and of that Union which is between them, *never to be dissolved*. And how admirably may the *Hardness of Mens Hearts*, be overcome by such a Consideration as this! And, how is the *Credit* of those who are the *Weaker Sex* provided for, by not being permitted now to be cast off upon every trivial Distaste! For that *Mysterious Signification*, which we said Marriage is enobled with, doth plainly hint that the Bond thereof is to continue firm and unbroken; and that the *Faithful Affections* both of the *One* and the *Other* in the *Wedded Pair*, will certainly, with other Virtues, after this Life, be rewarded; living, in a manner, for ever in that *Divine Love* they did here represent.

Fathers must be tender to their *Children*, and not provoke them to *Wrath*; from that winning Motive, that they have a *Father in Heaven*, who, they desire, may not be pitiless and wrathful to them.

And *Childrens Obedience* is quickned, by its being in the *Lord*: Which Expression doth not only hint the *Extent* of their Obedience, and how far it should reach, but doth shew also that *God is concern'd in it*, and doth observe whether it be truly perform'd or no. And the taking notice of the *Fifth Commandment*, as being the first that hath a *Promise annex'd unto it*; and the improving that Promise of *Earthly and Temporal Blessings* into *Spiritual and Eternal*, is a very high Encouragement of the Duty.

The *Faithfulness of Servants* hath Motives admirably strong; to wit, That they do Service to *Christ*, while they do it conscionably to their *Masters*. That He sees their Diligence or Loitering, when their *Masters* cannot; And that He will reward whatso-

134 *The True Nature of the Divine Law,*
ever good thing any Man doth, no less though he be
bound, than if he were free.

And *Masters* have a Motive equally as strong for
their *Gentleness and Goodness* towards their Servants,
from their *having a Master in Heaven, with whom is*
no respect of Persons. Which imports that the Au-
thority which a Master hath on Earth, shall not in
Heaven, or at God's Bar, stand him in any stead,
if he bear it hardly and frowardly towards his Ser-
vant.

Lastly, For *the Duty of Neighbours one to another.*
What more taking Motive can there be for their
Love and Peaceableness, than that they are *a lively*
Stones built up a Spiritual House? Absurd it would
be, if in our Buildings, the Materials should be at
variance; and will it not be much more so in Gods
Building, where *Jesus Christ is the chief Corner-Stone?*
They are excited to love one another as *being Bre-*
thren in a far more Noble Relation than *that of Na-*
ture. Thy Brother, saith St. Paul, (in more than
one place) *for whom Christ died.* And what an effe-
ctual and kindly Operation may this have, in all
those Matters of Discord, which may arise among
Neighbours and Friends? Shall such or such an
Offence make me an Enemy to *him for whom Christ*
hath died? Shall any Worldly Concern overturn
that Love, and break that *Union,* which Christ hath
Cemented, and Established with *his own most precious*
Blood? A mighty Inducement for the love of Neigh-
bours, *this:* Though not proper to this Relation
alone, but running through all the foregoing ones.
The higher place in every one of them being not
too high, and the lower one not too low, to ad-
mit the Name of *Brother.* And so all the Duties
thereof may be promoted, and the more benignly
carried on, by this Motive.

I thought it not amiss, *Theophilus*, in short thus to hint the *Excellent Motives*, which the Gospel affords, as proper to every particular Law, by itself considered. And they are, as I said, either purely Evangelical, as flowing some way or other from the Mystery of our Redemption, which could not have been known had it not been divinely revealed; or else such as are, to a much greater Persuasiveness, urged, than ever they were before.

Theoph. They prevail so much with me, that methinks were I in the meanest of these Relations; or could I, by turns, be each part in them all, I could love every Law belonging to them, for the apposite and excellent Motives which to every Law are annex'd.

But, *Eubulus*, you have not yet given me any taste of those Motives which respect the Laws to a Mans Self in particular.

Eubul. But since you seem to desire it, I will. And while I recount them in my thoughts sometimes, though I approve of any thing that leads to Virtue, be it even in the meanest of Philosophers, yet I have a low esteem of the very highest of their Encouragements, if compared with these of our Lord.

For the keeping of our Bodies free from Intemperance and Uncleanness, can there be any thing more prevailing than that they are Members of that Body, to which Christ is the Head? That they are Temples of the Holy Ghost? That they are bought with a price, even with the Blood of Christ? And that they will not be lost when they are laid in the Earth; but will be raised up again from the Dead? And he who is willing to weigh these things rightly, How can he take the Members of Christ and make them the Instruments of Uncleanness, the Receptacles of Luxury and Excess? How can he pollute that Temple which the Holy Ghost doth Consecrate, and delight to reside in? How

can he answer it if *he defiles that Body which is not his own*; yea, which our Saviour hath *Cleansed* with his Blood, as well as *Bought*? And with what Face can he abuse That which shall rise again from the Dead; but which, if it dies an un-chast Body, shall not be raised Chast: If a Vessel of Drunkenness and Intemperance, it shall not from the Grave become Clean and Pure?

Another Law, respecting ourselves, *is the keeping our Hearts pure*. And what Motive hereunto can be wish'd for greater than the *seeing of God*; i. e. the being fitted thereby for that Vision of him which is Beatifick; nothing that is impure being to enter there, where God's most Glorious Presence is? And not only so shall they *see God*, but he will manifest Himself also unto them by the *Joy*s of his *Blessed Spirit* within them; and by the *opening of their Eyes*, that they may *behold the wondrous things of his Law*; yea, and see him in every thing.

A Third Law to a Man's self, is the *Cutting off the Right Hand, and pulling out the Right Eye*, in case they offend him; i. e. the being willing to part with any thing, how useful and pleasant soever it be, rather than to be ensnared by it, or betray'd into Sin. And who will be un-willing to do this when he hears, *that it is better for him to enter into Life Blind or Maimed, than having two Hands or two Eyes to be cast into Everlasting Fire*? Not as if Lameness or the having One Eye should continue with him after his Entrance into Life. No, God can supply all those defects, and he will do it. But if any outward thing which possibly may not be less dear to the Man, than his Hand or Eye, shall occasionally ensnare him, by exciting corrupt desires; which cannot well be avoided otherwise than by parting with these Enjoyments: Better it will be to go to Heaven without them, where Eternal Happiness shall make up such losses, than

than retaining them in this World to be thrown into Hell, where he shall be for ever lost to them, and to himself.

The *last Law* (or Laws rather,) respecting ourselves, is the putting away all *Carking, Carefulness, Discontent* and *Impatience*.

It is impossible to conceive a more winning Motive against Carefulness, than that which the words of our Blessed Lord afford us. *Take no thought for your Life, what ye shall Eat, or what ye shall Drink; nor yet for your Body, what ye shall put on. Is not Life more than Meat, and the Body than Rayment? Behold the Fowls of the Air; for they Sow not, neither do they Reap, nor gather into Barns; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them. And why take ye thought for Rayment? Consider the Lillies of the Field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they Spin; yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his Glory was not arrayed like one of these. If God then so cloath the Grass of the Field, which to Day is, and to Morrow is cast into the Oven, shall he not much more Cloath you, O ye of little Faith?* Truly so pleasing and powerful are these persuasives, that they may allay all anxious Cares, no less from their Speculation, than from the Enjoyment of the things they speak of. And with such a Sacred Artfulness doth our Lord urge them, that they not only, for their matter, excel all the Philosophy of the Antients; but, for their expression, all their Oratory also.

And what may more nourish Contentation of Life, than, *That in God we Live, and Move, and have our Being.* That he is infinitely Wise, and so knows what is best for us; infinitely good, and so is not wanting to his Creatures? That, we are *Strangers and Pilgrims here*; and so 'tis reasonable, that having Food and Raiment, we should therewith be content? That he hath given us the greatest Blessing of his Love,

Love, his only Son to dye for us; and so we may well be content if some lesser Blessing be denied us; which yet if we enjoy'd, we could not tell whether they would be Blessings to us or not?

And are the *Motives for Patience in Troubles*, less strong and prevailing? Certainly they are not. This Grace hath a *Mark of Honour* affixed upon it, greater than which there cannot be. For God is styled the *God of Patience*; and we have his Faithfulness as a Pledge, that amidst our sufferings we shall not be forsaken. *God is Faithful, who will not permit you to be Tempted above that which you are able: But will, with the Temptation, make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.* At such gracious expressions, who is it will not be Patient? Nay, when we, as our Saviour was, are to be made perfect by Sufferings; when, through his especial favour, *they work for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory*, what Man is it, that, in his considerate thoughts, will not acknowledge, he hath reason even to *rejoyce in Afflictions*?

These Motives for Patience are such as are highly suitable to the Soul in its most perfect Actings and Desires; and are fitted to obtain their end, not on *some Tempers* only, which are of the more sturdy, and less sensible sort; but on *all Men* who have Reason and Understanding to consider things aright. They require not that we should think that *τὰ ἐκ ἐφ' ἡμῶν*, the things that are out of our power, have no Relation unto us; That there is no such thing as *Pain* in the World; or if there be, that it is not *Evil*. No, we are look'd upon as *Men*; and are allow'd to have a sense of the Afflictions that lie upon us: And, even while it is *thus* with us, we have Supports and Comforts, not such as are only *verba & voces*, airy and thin, deceiving us for a while into quietness; but *substantial* and *weighty* ones, sinking
into

into the Vitals, and in reality, greater than all the Troubles we can undergo.

Theoph. I have known some, who, possibly, from such Considerations, have borne up even under very great Afflictions. But yet when God hath deprived them of some *near Friends*; or of One whom the *Passion of Love* hath more intimately united to them than the *closest Ties from Blood* could do, have lost all their Patience. As *Rachel wept for her Children* and would not be comforted because they were not; so is it with these; and sometimes their Sorrow so much prevails, as to bring them down even into the Grave for their Deceased Friends.

Eubul. What you say is true; though I could wish it were not, for the Sake of more than one who are equally Dear to you and me. But I am not sorry that you have mentioned it; because, there are such proper and excellent Motives afforded by our Lord, for the Alleviating our Grief at the Death of Friends.

When they Dye, we are told they are but asleep, and will after a while awake again: And therefore we are not to Sorrow as some others do, who have no hope. While we commit them to the Ground, they are in a manner Sown, as our Corn is, and will come up again to greater advantage, both to us and themselves. They are Sown in Corruption, they shall be raised in Incorruption; they are Sown in Dishonour, they shall be raised in Glory. They are Sown in Weakness, they shall be raised in Power; they are Sown Natural Bodies, they shall be raised Spiritual. This is plainly spoken, and not only so, but is confirmed by our Lords own Rising from the Dead, and becoming the First-Fruits of them that Slept. Which implies, that as the Harvest followeth the First-Fruits, so shall our Christian Friends, with all other Holy Men, follow our Lord in his Resurrection. It is very remarkable that

that the Holy Scripture gives to the *whole Church*, as united with its Head, *The Name of Christ*. Thus *1 Cor. 12. 12. As the Body is one, and hath many Members, and all the Members of that one Body being many, are one Body, SO ALSO IS CHRIST.* Whence there may seem an holy Necessity that our Religious Friends should rise from the Dead. They are parts of the Church; and as the Church and Christ are one, He could not be said to be *wholly risen*, unless *They* likewise should rise from the Dead. *If there be no Resurrection of the Dead, saith the Apostle, then is Christ not risen;* which is true also in this sense. His Resurrection would be incomplete, and in effect no Resurrection, should not his *Church*, which is his Body, rise after him. What need is there then of so many Lamentations, and of such Floods of Tears? Why should we be dejected at the Graves of our Friends? which we may look upon as the places from which they will arise, rather than as the places wherein they are buried?

And what may yet further contribute to the appearing of our Sorrow, is their rising again *never to be sick more; Never any more to leave us;* but to enjoy us, and to be enjoyed by us, in an Eternity of Happiness. For it cannot reasonably be thought, that those *particular Friendships*, which were founded in Virtue, will not hereafter be continued in Heaven; especially since a *Religious Faithfulness and Constancy in Affection* shall have a good share in the Everlasting Rewards which are there given. So that we shall have our Friends again, and much more ours, than ever they were before.

Neither even at the present is our *Communion* with them dissolved by their Death: For that Bond which unites us one to another, and to our Head, is Spiritual; and so Death, which only divides the Soul from the Body, makes no real separation of the
Christian

Christian who is dead, from the Christians who are alive. For they who still *continue Members* of the *same Head*, do also *continue Members one of another*. And the same good Will which our Friends, as Christians, had to us while they lived, we may safely believe they have after they have left us : Such as consisteth in the *making Supplications* unto God, that it may be well with us both in Life and Death ; and in *rejoycing* at those Spiritual Blessings which are held out unto us for the obtaining that Happiness which they, before us, have reach'd unto.

Why then should we grieve as though they were quite lost unto us ? As though all our Interest in them were buried in their Graves ; and all that Virtuous Kindness they bore us, were wholly extinct ? We rather may rejoyce that their Love towards us, and other Christians, is increased, and more perfect, as their own Happiness is increased, and themselves are more perfect.

Theoph. What you say, might administer unto Patience, were it not that the *Fears of an Hell*, and the Apprehensions that it may be worse with them now they are dead, than it was when they were alive, did not so often interpose.

Eubul. But why should we suffer such Fears and Apprehensions to interpose in relation to those Friends who have loved Religion and Virtue, and made them visible in their Lives ? Precious in the sight of God is the death of such. And as for those daily Slips and Failures, which proceed only from that Weakness which is common to all Mankind, they, from the Sincerity which hath been in the Heart, shall be forgiven. Indeed there are some Persons for whom our Hopes cannot be so great ; and we are not to be blamed if our Grievings be of a larger measure in the Deaths of these. But yet we are by no means to pass sentence ourselves upon them,

them, but must leave them to stand or fall to their own Master. And the *same* God that commands us to be *charitable*, means that we should be so, not only to the *Living*, but the *Dead* also : And if he so strictly enjoins *our* *Charity* towards them, we have some reason to hope, he will not deny unto them *his own Mercy*.

This is certain, that however the evil Lives of some Men may render the Thoughts of Death less comfortable to themselves and others, yet, through our dear Lord's Dying for us, Death is, in reality, become an harmless thing to us, as we are Christians ; and we may Triumphantly use the words of St. Paul ; *O Death, where is thy Sting ? O Grave, where is thy Victory ? Thanks be unto God who hath given us the Victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ*. Nay, though Death to our Bodily Eyes hath Terroure in its Face, and is attended with Worms and Corruption, yet the same Apostle reckons it a part of *the Church's Dowry*, 1 Cor. 3. 22. *Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or Life, or DEATH, or Things present, or Things to come, all are yours ; and the same we may esteem it to be in relation to our departed Friends*.

You have seen, *Theophilus*, the excellent Motives for Patience on every Hand ; and for Obedience also to the other Laws that more nearly concern ourselves.

And truly the conceiving of a Man whose outward actions are all Clean and Chast ; whose inward Thoughts are Pure and Holy ; who can part with even Lawful Enjoyments rather than be insnared by them ; who is contented with his Lot ; not anxious for the years to come, and cheerfully bearing up under present sufferings ; the conceiving, I say, of such an one, so every way perfect, is very pleasant to the thoughts ; and we cannot sooner think of him
than

than we must Love him; the Laws then that form the Man to be such, must needs be no less fitted for our Love and Delight; and these, sure, will much be heightned from such pleasing and weighty Inducements.

Theoph. I'll confess to you, *Eubulus*, from this short account, which you have given, all my Affections are turn'd into a Love of these Sacred Laws; except only that there is some room in my Soul left for *Reverence and Admiration* of them. And I hope, while I speak the same Words that the Pious Mr. *Herbert* did, I speak to the utmost the same Truth also, *viz. That I would not part with one Leaf of these Holy Laws, might I have the whole World in Exchange.* They are able to make (would Men permit them,) an Heaven upon Earth; while Peace and Joy and Love would be in the Community, and an Holy Calmness and Inexpressible Pleasure, in every private Breast.

Eubul. And may such be continually in yours without any ceasing or decay, for the great Veneration and Love which you express to these Laws.

Theoph. Truly, *Eubulus*, it is impossible there should be any true Happiness without them. Should not the Understanding be recovered from that Blindness and Errour which are in it; should not the Will be reduced from its Pravity and Perverseness: Should not the Affections be delivered from their Tumultuousness and Evil Excesses, even Heaven would not be a place of Joy and Bliss. For how ungreeable would Glorious Mansions be, and an incorruptible Body, were the Soul imperfect and vicious in all its Faculties; unacquainted with Holiness, secretly grudging at God's Will, and openly disobeying it? What would the Salvation be, should Saint with Saint carry it ill-naturedly; and enjoy their Immortality, only for the Perpetuating of their Dissentions? And

And if to them, whose Natures are not fashioned by these Laws, *Heaven* would not afford an Happiness, we may be sure, *Earth* will not. Which makes me, *Eubulus*, to pity those Men as Enemies to their own Welfare, who esteem Liberty and Greatness to be then alone truly perfect, when they are attended with a Licentiousness; doing whatever liketh them, without any respect had to the Laws of God or Man. Whereas God himself, who is infinite in Majesty, and most absolute in Power, acteth according to the Eternal Laws of Righteousness and Goodness: And it is the perfection of his Greatness and Liberty, so to do.

Eubul. What you have said I cannot gainsay, but do much approve. And though, I confess, I could never think, (as some have done,) that the *Scriptures bare saying that they are the Word of God, is a sufficient Testimony that they are so*; yet from the inward Excellence of these Laws, and those admirable Motives which are added to them for the securing of our Obedience, there is, methinks, a substantial Proof of their Divinity and Truth.

Can it be thought that the *Devil could* ever prompt any Man to make Laws so righteous and good as these are? Or *that he would* promote their Observance with such mighty Rewards, such severe Threatnings, and such sacred Considerations? If so, then surely our Saviour's Argument of *Satan's being divided against himself*, and his Kingdoms not being able thereby to stand, might be altogether as valid in the present case, as then it was, when the Jews said, that *Devils were cast out by Beelzebub the Prince of the Devils*.

Neither have we more reason to imagine, That *any Man* out of his own falseness and deceit did make these Laws, since they are so directly destructive of all falseness and deceit; and may justly be supposed

posed to be everlastingly so, in that they are recommended to the World with Considerations so powerful and savoury.

From their own Purity, therefore, and Goodness, they may well be own'd to be the same Divine Precepts, which in reality they are.

Theoph. And let me add, That *no Man* ever deserv'd to be so much honour'd among Men, as *He* hath done, who hath given these Laws, and, beyond all example, hath encouraged their practice.

I cannot but think sometimes, how highly the grave *Lucretius* hath extoll'd (and is himself highly extoll'd by some for so doing,) his *Epicurus*; who endeavour'd to Arm Men against all Fears, by the beating down of all Religion, and the excluding the Gods from the knowledge of every thing on Earth, as being *neither pleas'd with good Actions, nor offended with evil ones*. And He (so far well,) doth shew, that all other Inventions, however very much conducive to the Welfare of Men, are yet nothing to be compared to *That* which will quiet tumultuous Passions, and render the Mind well informed and steady. Compare, saith he, *with This*, the great things which others have found out: *Ceres* and *Bacchus* are much honour'd; *She*, as having first taught the way of sowing Corn; *He*, as having first instructed Men in planting of Vines: But yet without these things Mens Lives may be sustain'd; and, as report goes, some Nations, even now, do live without them. *At bene non poterat sine puro pectore vivi*; but without a Breast well purged, a Man can have no happy Life. And then he goes on with the Praises of his Philosopher, as being worthy a Place among the Gods.

But if *He* had so much Honour, who profanely taught Men not to fear, what shall our Lord have, who, with sacred Religion, directs Men in the ple-

fant and right Paths to Happiness? Who gives them Laws, which will render them easie to themselves, and acceptable unto others; Who, in any Troubles that may besal them, affords them the only Methods of Comfort; by telling them, that God is a Father unto Men; in every thing taking care of them, and ordering even Afflictions for the good of those who are pious; Who makes known everlasting Joys after Death, which are prepared for those that live holy Lives; and renders the way thereunto not difficult by the help which he continually vouchsafes from above; And all this in such a wonderful manner, by having loved us even unto Death, with a Love much stronger than Death itself.

Eubul. Our Lord doth indeed, in these things, deserve Honour above all Men; and we may often, on his account, sing that Anthem which, at his Birth, the Angels sung, *Glory be to God on high; on Earth, Peace; Good-will towards Men.*

And I will further say, That They, who faithfully give up their Names unto him, have the Precedency, not only of all Those, who, among the Heathens, pretended to the study of Wisdom, but also of God's own People the Jews; yea, in a sort, even of *David* himself, who was so dear to him; and whom, in our Discourse, we have had occasion so often to mention.

For though I cannot but yield, that this King had a fair insight into the Kingdom of the *Messias*, and the things belonging unto it, (there being in his *Psalms* so many undoubted Descriptions thereof,) yet it will not be an Untruth to affirm, That the meanest Christian among us hath (unless it be his own fault,) more clear Revelations of Christ, of Life and Immortality, and of the Assistances of the Holy Spirit, than *David* had, or any of the Prophets.

The words of our Lord tending to what I now say, are very remarkable: *Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of Women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist. Notwithstanding he that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven, is greater than he,* Matth. 11. 11. *i. e.* However a very great Prophet *John* was; one that above all the rest, had the Honour to see our Lord in the Flesh; a thing which many Prophets and Kings had desired to see, and had not seen it; yet the least Disciple or Christian, when Christ shall be set at the Right-Hand of God, and shall raise up an Heavenly Kingdom upon Earth, shall be greater than *John. i. e.* From the being Baptized with the Holy Ghost, and having a larger knowledge of the Divine Will manifested; being made acquainted with higher and more noble things than *John* was used to, shall, in this respect, be greater than *He*, and more honoured than *Any* that lived before him.

Theoph. How pleasant a Prospect are these things to a Christian! And who could blame him, if, fixing his Thoughts upon them, He should account all other things (in the Apostle's words,) *as dung and dross* in comparison of them?

But, pray, *Eubulus*, Since the Law is so good, Assurances so great, and Motives so taking, how comes it to pass, that there should be so many disobedient ones, as we, almost every where, see there are?

Eubul. Too many, God knows, there are; and one reason that there are so many, is the superficial Knowledge of these things, and oftentimes a gross Ignorance. Were the elder sort called to Catechism, (and some of those who fail not seeing the Church once a week,) I doubt we should find them, though Men in Stature, to be yet but Children in Understanding; perfect it may be, (and it may be

be not,) in the words of the *Creed*, and the *Commandments*, but Strangers to the sense.

Theoph. But not a few, who are well instructed in the Divine Laws, are yet of Lives bad enough.

Eubul. It is a truth what you say; though a sad one to be told. Yet while there is so much Natural Pravity in the Heart of Men, and so many Temptations abroad, it is not difficult to guess the reason.

For Christian Religion, though it often-times overcomes our Natural Corruptions, yet doth not wholly root them out; and evil Inclinations will sway a great many from their Duty.

The Rewards, which our Lawgiver promiseth, are chiefly future and spiritual; and Men (such is their Earthliness,) are generally for those things that are present, and can be seen: And when those shall strongly solicit, and make shews of great Profits, or Pleasures, or Honours, it is no wonder that Multitudes are led away by them.

Add to this, That the Proofs of Christianity are not such as will compel Mens assent unto them, whether they will or no, but are to be inculcated often upon their Hearts, that they may there be firmly rooted. Now this requires Pains and Industry; and if many Men are for Sloth and Ease, and do account the weighing and considering of things to be harder, and more tedious, than bodily Labour, we may quickly discern wherefore it is, that the Laws of our Lord are so little observed.

And truly, the Actings of the Holy Ghost with Men, which are not ordinarily according to the fulness of his Power, but so as may be resisted, are, in the present case, worthy our Consideration. He by his Motions within us doth persuade, and silently he proposeth our Welfare, suggesting the true means of obtaining it, and furnishing us with
Strength

Strength and Aids from above, if we will admit of, and close with, them; but he doth not usually, with an *irresistible Power*, constrain us. And hence are those Expressions in Holy Writ, of *quenching* and *resisting* the Spirit; which, if he acted according to the greatness and extent of his Might, could not be quenched nor resisted.

Now, when Men are left to chuse what Paths they will take; when they must come in (as it were,) *to the help of the Lord* against their own Corruptions, and those Pleasures of Sense, which (as the forbidden Apple did,) *look fair*, and *to be desired*, it may not seem strange, that these are chosen, and the Divine Precepts neglected.

Neither is Christian Religion to be faulted, as if it did not provide means sufficient for the retaining Men in Obedience. It provides so far as is consistent with their Virtue, which brooks not Force, and would be lost, had it not the Will along with it.

And from what hath been said, *Theophilus*, you may guess how it comes to pass, that though the Laws are so good, Assistances so great, and Motives so taking, there yet are so many that continue in Disobedience.

But we must not make our Walk to be the Injury of our Health. It is a moist Air, and yonder Clouds look black upon us: An happy Night therefore to my *Theophilus*.

DISCOURSE the Fifth.

The Contents.

Though the Generality of Men be Wicked, and, by occasion of these Laws being given, shall suffer the greater Torments hereafter, yet it would not thereupon have been better that these Laws should not have been given. The impious folly of those Men who are willing to flatter themselves with God's being so much a God of Mercy as that he will not destroy them though they walk contrary to his Laws. An Explication of *I am the Light of the World.* Why Miracles were confined to the first Ages of the Church. That Prophecy made good, viz. *The Wolf shall dwell with the Lamb, &c.* The great Goodness of God in making these Laws to reach so wide as the whole World. His great Wisdom and Mercy in putting these his Laws into Writing, and enjoyn-
ing the frequent Reading and Preaching of them. The Reasonableness that these Laws should endure without Abrogation or Change so long as the World shall stand. The great expectation which was of this our Lawgiver
for

for so many Ages, and, in every respect, his answering of it, may prevail much for Mens Obedience to his Laws. The Righteousness and Goodness of these Laws will manifest themselves to those who are sincerely Obedient.

THEOPHILUS.

THE last part, *Eubulus*, of your Yesterdays Discourse, occasion'd a more than ordinary thoughtfulness in me. *The Lives of Christians* I reflected upon; and they, almost every where, appeared unto me little less than a contradiction to the Laws of Christ. Where is not *Piety* towards God neglected? *Unrighteousness*, and *Deceit*, towards Men, not carried on? *Enmity* and *Hatred* not nourish'd? *Intemperance* and *Unchastity* not abounding? And how rare are *upright* and *faithful Persons* to be found? In the midst of these my Thoughts, I was struck with those Words of the Apostle, 2 Pet. 2. 21. *It had been better for them not to have known the way of Righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the Holy Commandment deliver'd unto them.* And the not walking according to the Laws of the Gospel, however the Name of Christ be openly profess'd, I look upon to be a *Turning from the Holy Commandment.* And though I still acknowledg'd (and for ever shall acknowledge,) the Divine Laws to be Holy and Good, and the Blessing promised to them to be the highest expression of God's Love to Mankind, yet at last, I fell to think, whether the Wicked-

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ness of the Generality of Men, had not brought it to that
pass, that considering the greater Torments they shall
hereafter suffer by occasion of these Laws being given,
and the Gospel's being Reveal'd, it would not have
been better, that these Laws should not have been given,
and the Gospel not have been Reveal'd unto Men.

I will not justifie my Thought, as if it were Innocent ; it seemed to me, and still seems, Irregular. But, for the time, it was so lodg'd within me, that I could not easily remove it.

E U B U L U S.

Neither will I commend *this your Thought.* But lest it should leave behind it some Scruples in you, I think these things may, with Innocence, be replied unto it.

Viz. That though there are many that refuse the great Love of our Lord in his Laws, and the Happiness promised in the Gospel ; yet some there are who do entertain and embrace them and who always shall do so.

When *Elijah* thought that *He, even He alone was left a true Worshipper of the God of Israel,* there were *Seven Thousand in Israel who had not bow'd their Knee to Baal,* 1 Kings, 19. 18. Our Lawgiver hath, and for ever will have, a flock of Obedient ones ; though a *little flock* it be. And better it is, sure, that some through the Gospel should be Saved, than that all without it should Perish.

What Numbers there are that shall be Saved, there is none can tell ; for the Faithful, here, in the Visible Church, are, in a sort, Invisible unto us. But, They will, through the Divine Goodness, be greater, than some severe ones have been willing to think them.

With

With more Charity unto Men, and more Reverence unto God's Mercy, *which is over all his Works*, we may trust, that God will not permit the Work of his own Hands, and the purchase of his Son's Blood, to be so much destroy'd, since he hath assured us he hath no *delight in the Death of a Sinner*.

But leaving the Number of Those who shall be Saved unto God; and praying that he would every day increase his Kingdom, we may affirm, be the Number what it will, That it is better for their Sakes, who obey these Holy Laws, that the Gospel hath been Reveal'd, than it would have been for theirs who Disobey them, that it should never have been made known. And there is some Reason to think, that the Happiness of Holy Men in Heaven (how few soever they shall be who shall reach thereunto,) will, in the whole, be greater unto Them, than all the Torments of Hell shall be to the Damned, how numerous soever they are. Because the Merits of our Lord which were truly infinite, have obtain'd that Happiness, which will be answerable unto them; when the Sins of Men, which, though great, must needs be acknowledged less than our Saviours Merits, have deserved those Torments, which shall not be greater than their Sins were.

But, *Theophilus*, what I would further reply to your Thought is this; to wit, that so dear unto God are his own Wisdom and Justice and Goodness, and so much excelling all other things in the World, that the exercise of them through the Laws of the Gospel, be the Reception of those Laws among Men what it will, is better than the not revealing the Gospel would have been.

God is the Supream Legislator; and, in the Gospel Dispensation, he hath acted as it became Him who is every way perfect. If Men do not generally admit of his Mercy in so much Righteousness and
Wisdom

Wisdom shewn, it is yet good that it hath been shewn: Because he hath therein truly done the part of a Just and Gracious Lawgiver. And it is not fit that Mens not doing what was their Duty, should have hindred what was, in all respects, so befitting Him. And, if for their Disobedience to the Gospel-Laws, they shall suffer Everlasting Punishments, it is, yet better that those Laws have been given; because of the Glory of God's Justice, which is of infinitely more Value, than the freedom of such Rebellious Sinners from pains would have been. Which pains, albeit intense and endless they be, These Men do fully deserve, since they have refused Happiness no less (if not more,) intense, and altogether endless.

It would indeed have been better for these Mens *Persons*, (as they by Disobedience to the Laws of Christ have carried it,) that the Gospel should not have been made known. Not unlike as it was with *Judas*, of whom our Lord thus pronounced, *Good were it for that Man that he had never been Born*; Which is all one as if he had said; "Better it
"would have been for him that he had never been
"Born, than by his Traiterous Infidelity it will be,
"from my coming into the World. But though it would have been better for their *Persons*, (as the having no being is to be preferred before the being in Extremity of Torments,) yet considering the Whole of things together; better it is that even to their Misery (since their Misery is thus chosen by them,) the Gospel of Christ should have been Revealed, than that it should not have been. The Honour of God's Justice is hereby Magnified; Saints and Angels, who rightly see things, will discern the Beauty of it, and praise God for it; and God himself will have Infinite Satisfaction, from having done according to the Perfection of his Nature,

I thought it not amiss to say these things, *Theophilus*; They will not be your Injury, though possibly not needful to be spoken unto you. And if you'll interpret them to that *honest freedom* I take with you, you will do well.

Theoph. Such a Freedom I ought much to prize, which affords me Satisfaction in a matter which I durst not suffer to rise unto a Doubt. If it were ill suggested to my secret Thoughts, I foster'd it not: And I have the less reason to find fault with it, from the occasion it hath given of my being satisfied by you, against any such thought for the future.

It hath furnished me, I am sure, with that which directly meets with the impious Folly of some Men, (and those too too many,) who are willing to flatter themselves with God's being so much a *God of Mercy*, as that he will not destroy them, though they walk contrary to his Laws: Esteeming Men to be more pleasing to him as *they are his Creatures*, than displeasing as *they are disobedient*. And because *God's Mercy* exceeds *theirs*, and *they* could not find in their Hearts to condemn others to Eternal Punishments; They therefore are forward to think, that however he hath threatned, he will not condemn them. But the Glory of God's Justice being, as you have said, of infinitely more value with him, than the freedom of such disobedient ones from Pains can be reasonably thought to be, doth utterly dash such untoward Imaginations.

Eubul. What hath been said doth indeed appositely strike at these Men. For though God's *Mercy* be *infinite*, yet it is *exercised with Holiness and Wisdom*, which are likewise infinite. And He, who is every way perfect, will never lean to any one of his Glorious Attributes alone, so as in the least to forsake the other. His Mercy is infinitely shewn in accepting upon such gracious Terms Mens poor
Obedience

Obedience to his Laws. But if they shall refuse to obey him, preferring the Pleasures of Sin before his Righteous Commands; Their being *his Creatures*, and *the Work of his Hands*, will so little prevail with him, that, though they were yet further commended, by being the immediate Off-spring of *Abraham*, he would sooner, out of the Stones of the Street, form Men whom he might save, than shew Mercy unto those who are so unworthy of it.

Neither do *they rightly infer*, That God's Mercy, which is infinitely more than theirs, *will be shewn unto them*, because they themselves would be so merciful to the looser sort of Men, as to save them, while such, from the Punishments which are threatened. A great Indignity they offer unto the most Holy God, in thus making Him to be such as *Themselves* are. His Mercy is indeed infinitely more than theirs, but yet of a Nature altogether different. *Theirs* proceeds from weakness, and an evil favouring of Sin; And because their love to Righteousness and Holiness is little or none, they would therefore effect more for wicked Men, than God, who hath all Power, will do; or, if we consider his Justice and Wisdom, more than (with Reverence be it spoken,) he can do. God is not less merciful than they, but more just; not less pitiful, but more holy; not beneath them in Compassion, but infinitely above them in Wisdom. And therefore let them not deceive themselves with vain Words and Thoughts. God will in Righteousness inflict those Punishments upon them, which they, through a Vicious Mercy, would have remitted unto others.

Theoph. I would to God such things as these were truly weighed by Men, and urged home upon their own Consciences; that they might, at last, discern the Fallacies they have been willing to put upon themselves, even to their everlasting Destruction.

Eubul. We

Eubul. We now have, *Theophilus*, spoken to all those things which from the first we design'd; and have found the Divine Laws to be every way excellent, whether we consider

The Lawgiver; (Love having been the primary moving Cause of his giving Laws unto us; and this his Love being highly commended from the Greatness of his Person.)

Or, the Laws themselves; (all the troublesome Ceremonies of the Old Law being done away; and that in so excellent a manner; only such Laws being enjoyn'd as have in them an intrinsick goodness, or else are for ends absolutely good, and such as are discernable by every one. Those Moral Laws which were given to the Jews being by our Lord more fully and clearly given; And there being, from these Laws, a fair way for the pardon of all Sins.)

Or lastly, The Motives which are annexed to these Laws for the securing of Obedience; whether they be more *General*, relating to the Sacred Laws altogether, (as, their having Eternal Rewards promised to the Observance of them, and Eternal Punishments threatned to Disobedience. Their having stronger Assistances afforded for the Performance of them, than under the Old Law there were: And, last of all, their having such loving Invitations, and affectionate Expressions of Kindness joyned with them,) or whether more *Particular*, belonging to them singly and apart, (as they respect God or Men in the several Relations they may stand in one to another, or as they respect ourselves.)

But though, to our Power, we have done this, yet much short have we come of the Dignity of our subject. And while the Apostle asks the Question, *Who is sufficient for these things?* We must acknowledge that we are altogether *insufficient*.

But since a good part of our Walk is yet to come,
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it will not be amiss, from the whole of what hath been said, to make some *Inferences* not unagreeable to our Subject. And this Task I am willing should be yours, *Theophilus*, who I knew are good at deducing one Truth from another ; and who will do kindly by me, if you will let me be your Auditor now, as you have, mostly hitherto, been mine.

Theoph. He is most fit to make the *Inferences* who made the Discourse. But (if it will not be unacceptable,) I will endeavour alternately to follow you, if you will lead the way.

Eubul. If it must be so only, and you will not wholly excuse me, I will begin.

And, First, *Theophilus*, From the Divine Laws thus consider'd, we have (if I mistake not,) a true and just *Explication* of that place of Scripture, *Joh. 8. 12. I am the Light of the World, he that believeth in me shall not walk in Darkness, but shall have the Light of Life.* They are the Words of our Blessed Lord ; and are to be understood of Him as a Lawgiver ; so cleerly hath he in his own Person made good those Types that were of him, and dispell'd those shadows of things to come ; so excellently explain'd the Moral Law, and given a new lustre to it ; so thoroughly Reveal'd Heavenly Rewards, and brought Life and Immortality to Light. Hence, in the Prophet *Malachi*, He is call'd the *Sun of Righteousness* ; and in *St. Luke* he is term'd ἀνατολή, rendred in our Translation *Day-Spring*. But whether so, or the *East*, or *Sun-rising*, it certainly is a Title of our Lord ; as having done that in Relation to Spirituals, and Good Practice, which the Sun doth in its Rising, and with its Presence, viz. put to flight the Darkness wherewith we were encompassed. And thus the People that Lived in Evil Practices, and in Ignorance of the Divine Laws, are said to sit in *Darkness, and in the shadow of Death,*
Mat.

Mat. 4. 16. and, from our Lords coming, are said to see great Light, and to have Light sprung up unto them. Which must necessarily be understood of his instructing them; giving them Laws, and revealing unto them Eternal Rewards for the quickning their Obedience thereunto.

And this, possibly, may give us some insight into that place of Scripture also. Which hath been so difficult unto, and, in a sort, the Torture of Interpreters, *1 Pet. 3. 18.* *Christ being put to Death in the Flesh, but quickned by the Spirit; by which also he went and Preached to the Souls in PRISON, i. e. to those whose Souls within them were, through Ignorance and Evil Practice, as in the Darknes of a Prison.* The Light of Nature being almost quite extinct: To These, He, through the Spirit, Preached by the Mouth of Noah.

By his Laws it is therefore, and by other things upon their account Revealed, *that Christ is the Light of the World.*

And, after the same manner, is *God the Father* said to be Light; as having by these Laws, through Jesus Christ, shewn what He Himself is, what he chiefly and most earnestly doth Will, Desire, and Love; insomuch that we cannot likely be mistaken in his Nature, unless we will be so, either through Perverseness or Negligence.

Should any of those Heathens, who, in Relation to Human Welfare, had undervaluing Opinions of the Deity, have read these Laws, with the Inestimable Encouragements annexed unto them, they, when they had seen the *greatest Prosperity* to have its *allays* of Trouble; and *all Men* sooner or later to Die, could not any longer have thought, that God, out of Envy and ill Nature, would not permit an *unmixt Happiness* in this World; or that he would keep Immortality to himself, as by no means enduring that

that any should be partakers of it with him. It is but the due considering these Sacred Precepts, as they proceed from our Lords being given into the World, and God cannot but be confessed by us to be (as under the Gospel he styles himself,) *Love*; and with the clearest Light all the perfections of Goodness and Mercy will be discerned in him.

Theoph. Hence also we may (as I think,) not ~~un~~truly gather the reason, why Miracles, by which these Laws were established, were confined to the first Ages of the Church. So great is the Perfection, and Excellency of Christ's Laws, that now they are known they do not need such props to sustain them. They have inward Beauty enough to recommend them; and they carry (as I may so speak,) Marks in their own Foreheads to Testifie their Truth and Perfection.

Miracles, at the first, were indeed necessary in respect of Those who spread the Gospel; upon the account that they were to Combate with all Religions in the World; and so, were to be aided with a Demonstration of the Spirit: i. e. with a Power of working Miracles; by which they might be encouraged to carry on a work of so great difficulty.

And then, in respect of Others also, to whom this Gospel was Preached, Miracles were necessary: To shew that this Gospel was Divine; and not to be meanly thought of because it was New, and different from the Religions they had been used unto.

But now, there having been Time and Leisure for it to be known, from its Goodness, and the Efficacy of the Holy Spirit, which always, though invisibly, attends it, it will stand in the World: And, content with the Fame of Old Miracles, it, without the help of News ones, will constitute such a Church, as that the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. Neither will it, in humble and well temper'd Hearts and Affections,

Affections, have a less easie entrance, or a less sincere entertainment now, from its Pureness and Excellence, than at first it had when mighty Signs and Wonders made way for it.

Eubul. And may we not also hence infer, that Prophecy to be made good, which said, *The Wolf shall dwell with the Lamb, and the Leopard shall lie down with the Kid, and the Calf and the young Lyon, and the Fatling together?* In so much Righteousness, Goodness, and Wisdom, are these Laws of Jesus Christ made, that the Tempers and Dispositions of Men which are different as the Wolf and the Lamb, the Leopard and the Kid, the Calf and young Lyon, shall, if they will sincerely submit themselves to the Scepter of Christ, be united and reconciled.

He that is Proud and Lofty, shall be taught to be Meek and Lowly. He that breathes nothing but Hatred and Enmity, shall be instructed to love all Men, yea, even his Enemies; and this upon a most rational and excellent account. He that is hard-hearted and covetous, and would not abstain from enriching himself, though it were by the Tears of the Orphans and Widows, shall be learnt to pray for the Welfare of others, to rejoyce in the Blessings which God bestows upon them, and freely to part with his own for the relief of his poor Brethren. All sweetness of Nature, all love and sincere Affection, will these Laws of our Lord instil into, and nourish in the Breasts of Men, unless they refractorily shall stand out against their own Happiness. And if they do, the fault shall be in themselves; for there is no defect in these Sacred Laws, why they should not obtain their blessed End. They only require of Men, to act as Men of Understanding Souls should do; and, without any Force offered, do leave them the use of their Reason, and a freedom of choice. And if they shall refuse Obedience

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dience to the Laws of Christ, the blame is their own: But those his Laws must be acknowledged to be thoroughly fitted for the making every *Mountain and Hill low*, the *Crooked strait*, and the *rough places plain*; i. e. to render the haughty, the perverse, the ill-natured, compliant unto Peace; and the poorest Persons not too low to have a tender respect and love shewed unto them.

Theoph. And hence also, *Eubulus*, we see the great Goodness of God, in making these his Laws to reach so wide; there not being any part of the World to which they do not belong.

It is not now one Nation alone, that hath the Priviledge of these Laws beyond others. Neither is any *Ammonite* or *Moabite* forbid to enter the Congregation of the Lord till the tenth Generation. The extent of these Laws is correspondent to the goodness of them; and they may be truly called the *Kingdom of Heaven*; not only because from their Righteousness and Purity they are a *Lively Image of that Kingdom*, which we believe to be in Heaven; but also because as far as *Heaven reacheth*, they also reach; And thus the Kingdom of Heaven is explain'd by some, *Matth. 3.* and some other places of Holy Writ. *The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*; i. e. Those Laws, and that Government are approaching, which shall spread themselves as far and wide as Heaven. Answerable to that of *Daniel*, Chap. 7. 27. *The Kingdom, and Dominion, and the Greatness of the Kingdom under the whole Heaven, shall be given unto the Saints.*

And herein consisteth the great note of Distinction betwixt the *Mosaick* and *Evangelical Dispensation*. Under the former, the *Land of Canaan* must be repair'd unto by those few, of other Lands, who were willing to know and do Gods Will: Under the later, the Divine Law doth itself, (as it were,)

Travel throughout the World; and cometh even home unto those many that are most remote; investing them with Priviledges greater than Theirs, who once were preferred above all the Nations of the Earth.

The Infinite Goodness of God, this is, thus to give the Heathen to be his Sons Inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the Earth to be his Dominion. A Favour, *Eubulus*, highly to be prized by us, who are not to forget what large Bounds the Devil had gotten in our Gentile World. How Wickedness not fit to be divulged, was, in many Temples, the very Essentials of the Sacred Rites: And how, from the Examples of their Gods, the Votaries could infer a Liberty for the vilest Practice. *Ego homuncio hoc non facerem? Ter, Eunuch.* So that it is no wonder, that Impudence was by some of them reckoned one of their Deities, and had Divine Worship paid to it.

And though indeed Christ's Flock in Scripture be called a little Flock, yet that, possibly, might have an immediate Relation unto the Number of the Disciples, who then were, and were but few; and not to those, who, in great Multitudes, were to be added to the Church afterwards. We read of Thousands in a short time won over to the Church, and submitting to these Laws. And *Rev. 7. 4.* we are told, that there was a great Multitude in Heaven, which no Man could number of all Nations and Kindreds, and People, and Tongues, standing before the Throne and the Lamb.

But if Christ's Flock be little, (as too sure it is,) in Comparison of the rest of Mankind, who by reason of Infidelity, Profaneness, Hypocrisie, and other corrupt Practices, have little Relation unto Christ; it is not because these Laws do not extend unto Them, but because They refuse them.

The Goodness of God is not the less for not being entertain'd by the Generality of Men. Were it with an Impartial Eye look'd upon, it might excite

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the Praises of all Men. That now *every Nation* is in the sight of God of equal account with the *Land of Judea*. *Every City*, that will truly own and obey his Laws, is esteem'd no less than *Jerusalem*; and *every Temple*, where true Devotion is offered up, where the Laws of Christ are un-corruptly declared, and his Sacraments duly Administred, as highly valued by him as *the Gates of Sion*, and *the Temple there*.

And as he respects not *One Nation* before another, so neither is He, a *respector of Persons*. The Poor Man shall not be despised because he is Poor, but shall have his Obedience kindly accepted, and fully Rewarded. Neither shall the Rich be Envy'd or Rejected, because he is Rich; but shall find our Lord Faithful and Just in the Valuing and Recom-pensing the Observance of his Laws.

So that we may say with *David*, (possibly in a larger Sense than he meant of Lands, Nations, and People, which in Holy Writ are often limited to the Tribes and Families of the Jews; the Regions and Cities of *Palestine*,) *O be joyful in the Lord all ye Lands, serve the Lord with Gladness, and come before his presence with a Song. Let the People Praise thee, O God, yea, let all the People Praise thee; For, having given such Excellent Laws to all People, thou wilt judge the folk righteously; and, with thy especial favour, govern all the Nations upon Earth. Hear ye all ye People, give Ear all ye Inhabitants of the World; both Low and High, Rich and Poor, one with another; the Goodness of God is the same to you all, in these his Holy Laws; Praise him therefore and Magnifie him for ever.*

Exbul. And have we not also from hence, *Theophilus*, an instance of Gods Wisdom and Mercy, in putting these his Laws into Writing; and enjoying the frequent Reading and Preaching of them?

What

What are for all the World, and do belong to all Nations how distant soever, could not so conveniently have been dispersed for the good of all, had they been confined to some Mens Breasts only. Whereas now, in their being written, they can the more easily and punctually be known. And from their being translated into all Languages, and speaking in those Languages the same thing, God is pleased happily to reverse the Confusion of Tongues at *Babel*.

Had they been left merely to an Oral Tradition, we, by reason of the Passions, Prejudices, Interests, and (to say the best) the Weakness of the Memories of Men, should have had little security for their being preserved uncorrupt; if yet they would have been preserved at all.

The Instance is sad, (but not impertinent to be mention'd,) how by this Traditional way, the Knowledge of God and his Laws were, in not many Hundred Years after the Flood, in effect, wholly lost; not retrieveable but by new Revelations, and the Constituting, as it were, a new Ecclesiastick State in *Abraham* and his Posterity; to which, for a not unlike Reason, he afterwards saw it requisite to write his Laws in the Mount.

Besides, how would they have escaped amidst the Enthusiasms of many, who pretend unto fairer Revelations than any of these Written Laws? Which shews the great Wisdom of God in committing these his Laws unto Writing; and may also shew Us, that no Laws, which are not Written, are to be accounted His, how Divine soever they may be pretended. For why, these should be put in Writing for the securing them from the corrupt Passions, and personal Weaknesses of Men; and others, of no less Authority and Concern (as is pretended,) than These, should be left merely to the Breasts and Tongues of

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some Men, who are of like Passions and Deficiencies with others, I must confess, *Theophilus*, I understand not.

Nor is Gods Mercy less shewn than his Wisdom; in that now, we are not to go we know not whither, to seek the Will of God, that we may obey it; but have his Laws near us, and at hand, in every place. As God said to the Israelites, *Deut. 30. 13.* so may it now be said to all Men: *These Laws are not hidden from thee, neither are they far off. They are not in Heaven, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go up for us into Heaven, and bring them unto us, that we may hear them, and do them? Neither are they beyond the Sea, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go over the Sea for us, and bring them unto us, that we may hear them, and do them? But they are nigh unto thee, in thy Mouth, and in thy Heart, that thou mayst do them.* Nigh they are, and not a Family but may have them always lie open to their view; not a particular Person but may have them as a Treasure in his Chamber or Closet.

Neither doth God only take care that these his Laws should be made known by being *Written*; but he hath also commanded that they being *Written* should be *Preached*. For those Precepts, *Preach the Word, be Instant in season and out of season, Reprove, Rebuke, Exhort with all long-Suffering and Doctrine*, are not Temporary ones, given to *Timothy*, and, in Him, to cease; but such as are to be practised by Ministers to the end of the World. They must not be negligent to put Men always in Remembrance of these Laws, though they be already known; but still *Line must be upon Line, and Precept upon Precept; here a little, and there a little.*

A very great Mercy of God it is, *Theophilus*, that he will have his Laws, though they be *written*, to be yet thus *frequently Preach'd*, that none may perish
for

for want of Knowledge. And a Mercy it is no less, that though his Laws be *Preached*, he yet hath caused *them to be written*, putting them into the Hands of every Christian; That, in case False Teachers should arise, (as 'tis foretold there will,) we may have wherewithal to discover and disprove them.

And truly, the having the Holy Scriptures in their Hand and Eye, is a Priviledge that one would wonder any should endeavour to take away from the People, since it always, by the Bounty of God, belong'd unto them. Under the Old Testament, the Divine Laws were to *be bound upon the Hands of the People*, and to be, as it were, *Frontlets between their Eyes*; *to be written also on the Posts of their Houses, and on their Gates*; so far were they from being withheld. Under the New Testament, we find that the Writings of the Evangelists were not composed for the use of the Apostles only, but for every Christian also, in particular: As may, in good sort, be seen by our Saviour's Sermon in the Mount; which was not spoken to the Disciples as Ministers, but as private Christians. For, at his Preaching it, there were no Apostles; they not being made, nor sent, till afterwards. We find also, that all the Epistles (excepting those only to particular Persons,) are written to *the Holy Brethren*; *To the Churches of God that are sanctified in Jesus Christ*; And to all that *call upon the Name of the Lord Jesus*.

And hereupon we may discern, (as in a late Book hath been well discoursed,) that the Holy Scriptures are, as it were, a *Trust* committed to every Christian; and he is to be so *true* to his charge, as by no means to part with it. Yea, these Sacred Writings are our Lord's *Will and Testament*; by which a Man becomes an *Heir*, through Jesus Christ. And if so, then *He* that is *Heir* of an Estate, hath,

surely, no less right to the *Conveyances* that make over the Estate, than he hath to the Estate itself. And therefore, if in common Estates upon Earth, it will be every Man's Prudence to secure to himself the Deeds upon which the Estates depend: In this Heavenly Inheritance, it will be every Mans not Prudence only, but Duty to preserve to himself the Writings that convey it. The reason is, because, though a Man may, without blame, sometimes part with an Inheritance on Earth, yet with That, in Heaven, he cannot, without the Imputation of Folly and Wickedness; and even the exposing of his own Soul to Sale and Servitude.

The Pleadings of some Men, *viz.* "That the permitting the Scriptures to be in the Hands of the common People, is the cause of Schisms and Heresies, would have more weight with it, if, in the Ages most fruitful of Schisms and Heresies, the Learned had not had therein as great a share as (not to say a greater than,) any others; and, if, where the Vulgar have, of late, in this matter, seem'd most guilty, we had not too much reason to believe, That even Those, who most complain of them, have by their secret Emissaries, seduced them, on purpose, into Errors, and divided them into Parties; when otherwise they would have walked in straiter Paths, and been more at Unity amongst themselves.

But though there hath been, by some, an ill use made of the Scriptures, yet God, to whom These Things long before were not hid, thought them not reason enough for hindring the Writing of his Will; or for the withholding it, when written, from the Hands of any. And his Goodness and Wisdom is herein manifested, in that the *ill effects* which would have proceeded from the not writing his Laws, or the denying them to the Eye of the Vulgar, would;

would, in all probability, have been far more and greater, than from the contrary: And the *good effects* of their being written, and allow'd to the use of all Men, are, by the blessing of God, much greater than the bad Consequences now are.

Theoph. *Inferr'd* also may be *the Reasonableness* that these Laws should endure, without Abrogation or Change, so long as the World shall stand.

The Gospel is called, *Ἐυαγγέλιον αἰώνιον*, *The Everlasting Gospel*, Rev. 14. 6. Such as never shall cease, nor be, as to the Laws of it, in any case Repeal'd. And upon this account it is, that the Time from our Lord's Ascension, to the End of the World, or his Coming to Judgment, is called the *Last Days* in Holy Writ. A great many years, indeed, have passed since these Laws were given by our Lord; and a great many more possibly may pass, before the Dissolution of the World shall be; but yet these are the Last Days; because we are not to expect another Dispensation, nor another Lawgiver: For it is *He* that *will be with us* (in his Laws, and by his Spirit,) *unto the End of the World.*

Better Laws cannot be given. None can Imagine how there should be any Other more suitable to Infinite Holiness, Justice, and Goodness in Him that gives them, or more agreeable to the Nature and Soul of Men to whom they are given. And so, if the Gospel, wherein these Laws are, be called *Everlasting*; if the Time that shall be to the End of the World, together with that which hath already been since these Laws were given, hath the *Appellation of the Last Days*, upon the account that a further Declaration of God's Will is not to be expected; we, from our foregoing Discourse, may easily perceive that abundant Reason there is, why it so should be.

And whosoever they be, that shall make the Breach of any of the Divine Laws either to be *none*, or a *less fault now*, than in former Ages it was, under a Pretence that our Nature groweth weaker every Day than other, and must therefore have its *Allowances* in Disobedience, (for so they seem too plainly to affirm who say, *Hodie pro fornicatione neminem esse deponendum, quia fragiliora sunt nostra Corpora quam olim erant*, Distinct 82 in Gloss.) do foully reflect upon our Lawgivers *perpetual institution*; and make those Sacred Precepts, which should govern the evil Inclinations of Men, to be, in effect, *over-ruled* by them; which is a thing so extreamly ill, that the World must be *weak* indeed, when it is not odious to a Religious Ear.

Eubul. Your Inferences, *Theophilus*, are Right; and I cannot, at present, think of another; But that must not hinder your further going on with them.

Theoph. I have done what I promised; following every one of yours with another. But if you have made an end, your ceasing is my excuse; and may well be so.

Eubul. To draw then to a Conclusion of this our Subject. I hope in the Consideration of the Divine Laws; we have not exceeded the bounds of our Duty; by inquiring further than we ought to do.

Theoph. I think, I justly may absolve you from any such fault, now committed. For though it be a fault over-curiously to pry into the Laws of our Lord, as if all the Reasons of them were to be understood by us; and though, where we do not understand many things in Relation to them, we are to acquiesce, by persuading ourselves, that they are, in every respect, Holy and Just; yet where the reasons of them lie open to view, or, at least, by an Humble and Devout search into them, may easily be found out, there it will

will be well-becoming us, and no more than Duty, to look into them: That the Excellences of them may be discern'd by us; and that our Love of them, and Gods Glory from them, may be the more raised and magnified. And indeed, *Eubulus*, in all your words I have perceived nothing but what is agreeable to so humble a search, and so pious an end. And I acknowledge myself as much edified thereby, so likewise much obliged to you.

Enbul. The Design of our Discourse hath been good: And that, I trust, will cast a Vail upon what Defects soever may have been in it. And if it hath administred to your Satisfaction, or, in the Apostle's words, but *stirr'd up your pure Mind by way of Remembrance*, I shall account its doing so to be sufficiently my Reward.

A good Work it would be, *Theophilus*, if, upon occasion, we could prevail abroad for a due esteem and love of these sacred Laws.

Men are apt to think, (and sometimes they may think right) that, in relation to the Commands of Masters and Governors, they could do better than what they are enjoyn'd to do: And yet, notwithstanding, they will yield Obedience, as judging it but reasonable, That not always what is best, but what best pleaseth those who are in Power, is to be done. But better they cannot do than that which the Laws of our Lord require. His Will never stands in Opposition to what is, in itself, really best; because he is pleased with nothing but that which is holy, just, and good. Which sure may create a very great Satisfaction in us, whilst we submit to his Laws; and may render those his Laws of very high account with us.

But yet, for all this, his Laws, and Himself too, are much disesteem'd; and the mean regard which they generally find, hath made me with sorrow to think

think upon those Words of *Arrian's Epictetus*; *Τοι-
πολέμῳ μὲν ἱερὰ καὶ βωμὸς, &c.* Men, saith he, have
built Altars and Temples to Triptolemus, who shew'd
them the way of Agriculture; *τῷ δὲ πῶς ἀλίσσειαν ἐν-
εργῇ, καὶ φωνήσαντι, &c.* But to Him who finds out, and
gives Light to the Truth of Things; directing Men not
merely to preserve Life, but to Live well, and as Men
ought to do, Who of you all Dedicates a Temple to his
Honour, or so much as thanks God upon his Account?

All this cannot, I confess, be said, with relation
to our Lawgiver. Temples are built unto him, and
Praises are offered unto God who sent him into the
World. But are they not, with a great many, as
an outward shew, rather than the Expressions of in-
ward Devotion, and unfeigned Thankfulness?
While they obey not the Laws of Him whom they
thus celebrate; and (to use our Lord's own words,)
do draw near unto him with their Lips, when their
Heart is far from him.

Most Men are willing to have our Lord their Priest
to Atone for their Sins, and for Novelty and Enter-
tainment, they can be content to have him their Pro-
phet too. But as a King and Lawgiver they care not
for him; and are backward to submit to his Scepter
and Laws. Yet surely his Scepter is a Righteous
Scepter; and his Commands not grievous; but such as
are fitted to Human Nature, and its Interests in this
World; that the Man may seem unwilling to be
Happy, either here or hereafter, who refuseth Obe-
dience unto them.

It was a true word of the People concerning our
Lord, That *never Man spake as he spake. His Words
were with Authority*, bringing a Convincingness along
with them. And shall Men now be deaf to them?
Frequently did our Saviour use that Exhortation,
(shall I call it?) or Command, or both, *He that hath
Ears to hear, let him hear.* As much as to say, Of
so

so great importance are the things I declare unto you, that if ever a more than ordinary Attention was requisite, now it is. Well it were, if it could not be said of Multitudes, *That there is a Price put into their Hands, and they have no Heart to it.*

Theoph. Let me add, *Eubulus*, that the great expectation which was of this our Lawgiver, and his Laws, may prevail much for Mens Obedience to them. Towards Him the Faces of the Jews, even from *Moses's* time, and upwards, were bent: The coming of *Shiloh* was earnestly waited for: And He, after so many Prophecies made of him, had the Name of \omicron ἐρχόμενος, and ἐρχόμενος βασιλεὺς, *Him that Cometh, or the Coming King*, as is very frequently to be seen in the Evangelists.

And when the Ages past were so intent upon his Coming; when there were so many Types and Predictions of him, which, under his Government, betokened the greatest Happiness unto Men, shall Men, *now He is come*, esteem meanly of Him and his Laws? And this, when to those, who will impartially weigh and consider things, He is not a jot less worthy than all the Expectations of a great People, for many more than a thousand Years, and those many Figures and Prophecies of him, imported him to be? Yea, when He is excellent beyond the Conceptions of Men; *Angels themselves desiring with Reverence to look into these things?* When also *All Men* are no less concern'd in Him *now*, than the *Jews formerly were?* How ill will it look, after all this, if Men shall slight his Person, and refuse Obedience to his Laws; which if a Man observe, he shall *not only live in them*, but live happily to all Eternity?

Eubul. Your Persuasive for Reverence and Honour to the Person of our Lawgiver, and for Submission and Obedience to his Laws, is very strong. Yet, methinks, I would not more urge for an Ob-
servance

fervance of, than for an hearty Love unto, those his Laws. Though truly, where there is a faithful Observance, there will be a true Love of them also. Their Righteousness and Goodness will presently manifest themselves to those who are Conscionably Obedient. And, as our Lord saith, *Wisdom is justified of her Children*; so these Laws, which may, in reality, be termed *Wisdom*, as proceeding from Him, who is Wisdom itself, will justify their own *Excellencies* to the Thoughts of those who observe them; and by Them will be vindicated against all Gainsayers and Disobedient Ones.

I will end all with this Prayer; *That God by shedding abroad his Love into our Hearts, would encrease our Love daily more and more to his Laws; That we may cheerfully obey Him in this World, and be everlasting rewarded by Him in the next.*

DISCOURSE the Sixth.

The Contents.

Not a few think themselves secure in their actings, if they can shew that some good Men in Holy Writ, or some well accounted of since, have done the like. Examples of Good Men to be imitated no further than they have the Laws of Christ for their Rule and Warrant. They can of themselves lay no Obligation upon us. The Holy Men we read of in Scripture, were not sent into the World to be a Rule to all Others in the Things they acted. The Uncertainty of Examples very great. Their Insufficiency. None of the Actions of our Blessed Lord, from his Example merely, and without a Law, did lay any Obligation upon us to Imitate them. The Laws of Christ reach to all Moral Actions. No Examples of Goodness beyond what is included in those Laws. Inferences concerning the Examples in Holy Writ. In those things where the Law of God is Silent, Prudence is to be our Guide. Examples, though of themselves they lay no Obligation upon us, are yet of use. Those which
bear

bear the Image of the Laws of Christ, are given us for Incentives and Encouragements of our Obedience. When Divine Laws are question'd as to their Sense, Examples, upon occasion, may be Interpretations of them. By Examples we may be instructed to do our Duties in a decent, and becoming way. Decency added unto Sincerity may make its reward the greater. Examples are Registred in Holy Scripture for the Honour of those, whose they were. Our Condition the more sure, than it would have been, if we had had none in whose Steps we might tread. By comparing Examples with our Rule, we shall quickly find whether they will hold Good for our Practice or no.

T H E O P H I L U S.

YOU have finished, *Eubulus*, what you intended concerning the Divine Laws. But, I hope, you have not therein put an end to Discourses of a like Nature, Religious and Sacred. So much have you won upon me by your Five last, that, should you be willing to rest, I would crave leave (for this once at least,) to excite you forwards. Or, should you enter upon new matter that standeth at any distance from Religion, how Ingenious soever it might be, I would presume to stop your Course.

EUBULUS.

EUBULUS.

ALthough the things that are Holy, may be administered unto by things which, in their Nature, are not so; and even by Lower Objects may afford Recruits to a Mind long engaged in Diviner Speculations; yet since you are so much taken with These as to account them your Refreshments as well as Business, your so good Inclinations I will no way stint.

Theoph. And why, *Eubulus*, should not Christians (especially those that have Time and Leisure,) often make Religion, and the great Concerns thereof, to be the matter of their Discourse, as well as *Plato*, and *Cicero*, and some others, made the Immortality of the Soul; the Contempt of Death; the bearing of Troubles bravely, and other things not unlike these, to be the Subject of theirs? These things were, I may say, their Divinity; and though their Reasonings were in the dark, and themselves uncertain amidst their Disquisitions, yet they esteemed them to be the chief things that made the Life of Man happy. I see not why it should be otherwise with us; who have greater Assurances of the Truth of our Divinity; and, as to our Welfare and Happiness, are therein not less, but more, concern'd than they were.

Eubul. I would think that many there are, who are more frequent and fervent in the thoughts of these things, than you seem to think they are. But Christianity being that which chiefly instructs the Heart; and which, for the better excluding of Hypocrisie and Vain-glory, doth contain Precepts that in some Acts enjoyn secrecie; therefore, I suppose, a great many, willing rather *in reality to be*, than *to appear*, Religious, are not so forward to talk of the things, which yet they truly love.

Theoph. I will not be against any Interpretation that carries Charity towards other Men. I yet may be allow'd to fear, that to some, their Religion is the less confirm'd in their thoughts, from their constant avoiding, in their words, any thing that tendeth thereunto. Not to say that some, by shunning one Rock, have split upon another; putting on too much the Guise of Profaneness, while they have abandon'd the Garb of Hypocrisie.

But you and I shall not, between ourselves, be suspected of any such Vanity; and, being thus in private, are free from the Censures of others also, if we bend our Talk towards sacred Things.

I therefore request of you, that, in pursuance of your former Discourses, you would consider the *Examples of Pious Men Registred in Holy Scriptures*; which are esteem'd by many of little less force than the Divine Laws; and, ranked with them, are made, in part, the Rule of our Actions.

Eubul. I shall the more willingly yield unto this your Request, because too much is attributed to the Examples of others. And not a few are they, who think themselves secure in their Actings, if they can shew that some good Men in Holy Writ, or some well accounted of since, have done the like.

Theoph. Truly, *Eubulus*, I have myself taken notice, that some things, which, look'd upon in themselves, would be acknowledged not to be right, yet considered as done by such and such Persons, (as if their doing them had put a new Nature into them,) will be well thought of; and often, without any scruple at all, will be imitated.

Eubul. And hence it is, that a great many are uncertainly good; and more are, too surely, evil in their practice.

Theoph. How far then, *Eubulus*, may the Examples of good Men be imitated by us?

Eubul. E'en

Eubul. E'en no farther, Theophilus, than they have the Laws of Jesus Christ for their Rule and Warrant. Which will be manifest to any one who will impartially consider these two things.

1. *That Examples, as of themselves, can lay no Obligation upon us.*

2. *That the Perfection of the Laws of Christ is so great, that they reach to all Moral Actions, and even to the Thoughts of our Hearts.*

Theoph. I will be very attentive to you; and I hope you expect not my further Intreaties for your progress.

Eubul. First then, *That Examples, as of themselves, can lay no Obligation upon us.* And this in a twofold respect; *From want of Authority in the Persons partly; and partly from the uncertainty and insufficiency of their Example.*

From a want of Authority in the Persons, first.

The Holy Men we read of in Scripture, were not sent into the World to be a Law to all others in the things they acted. If we look upon the Patriarchs, together with the Prophets, what was there in them that might shew, that every thing they did was to be a Rule to the whole Nation of the Jews then, and to all Mankind afterwards? They had indeed Authority enough for the engaging Obedience to what they said. Moses received from God the Laws which he gave: And his delivering them with these words, *God spake, or, Thus saith the Lord,* or some such like form, and confirming the truth of them also by Miracles, was Argument sufficient for their being observed. And the Holy Prophets, carrying Testimony of their being divinely inspired, might claim

Attention and Observance to their Prophecies, in whatever related to practice.

But what Authority did all *their Actions* bear for Imitation? All of them were Men of *like Passions with us*; and their Persons were much of a different sort from the greatness of the things they wrote.

Moses had something in him that was worse than his slowness of speech; for *he spake unadvisedly with his Lips*. What failures *David* and *Solomon* had; what passions *Jonah* towards his God, we know. *Ezekiel*, who had the most Visions of any, is more often than any call'd the *Son of Man*; lest he (as is thought,) should have forgotten his own Meanness. And *St. Paul*, *that he might not be exalted above measure*, and that others also might not think too highly of him, had a *Messenger of Satan sent to buffet him*. And if we should run through all the Personal Failings of Holy Men, the Authority from their Example would be found to be little or none. As *St. Paul* saith of himself, and the other Apostles, *We have this Treasure in Earthen Vessels, that the Excellency of the Power maybe of God, and not of us*; so may it also be said of *Moses*, and the *Prophets*: They were but as a mean Cask to the Will of God, which was inclosed in them, and by them delivered unto others; and their own Persons and Actions of no Authority in respect of the Injunctions which from God they declared.

The *Uncertainty*, *Theophilus*, of *Examples next*, will shew us that they, of themselves, do not oblige us.

How many of those Examples shall bind us to Imitation, is no where in Scripture told us. Some of them carry an open unlawfulness along with them. Others may well be question'd whether they be rightly honest or not: And others that were
lawful

lawful and good in the Circumstances they, when acted, were in, will be found not so easie to be fitted for our own, and all other Mens Circumstances. For they admit of an unaccountable variety; and that variety may so much alter the quality of Actions, as to make some, that are lawful, to become sinful; and others that we are free to do or not to do, to become necessary to be done.

So that either we must be told in how many Circumstances such Examples will hold good, and be imitable, and in how many they will become unlawful and inexpedient; or else every one must be left to chuse what Examples he will, and to apply them how he thinks good.

The *former* is a Task that no Man will undertake; The *later* would bring in the greatest Confusion of Practice; while some would take the bad Examples, others misapply the good; and so all Edification and Unity would be overthrown.

And as the Examples are *uncertain*, so are they *insufficient*. And indeed so far as there is an Uncertainty, there is, in some sense, an Insufficiency. For should they be never so full in themselves, yet if Mens Understandings should generally be so dim-sighted, as that they could not, through diversity of Circumstances, discern how to take right Measures of their Actions from them, they would be *insufficient as to us*.

But we shall find a great Deficiency of Examples in Holy Writ, in that there are Thousands of Actions, which are to be governed by Religion, (as indeed all our Actions are,) of which we can find no suitable Example in Scripture. I need not, *Theophilus*, give you nor myself the trouble of gathering together many Instances of Actions to shew what I now say. Let Men, in the *Diversity of Callings* that are in the World; and in the *many Relations*

that they *stand in unto others*; consider their own Actions; and amidst all the Examples of Scripture, they will see themselves *left alone*, not having a *sure Light* from any of them.

Whence from the Uncertainty and Insufficiency of the Examples, as well as from the want of Authority in the Persons, no Examples are Obligatory unto us; nor to be imitated any further than they have the Laws of Christ for their Rule and Warrant.

Theoph. But, *Eubulus*, our *Blessed Lord* wanted no Authority in his Person; and his Example was perfect; and what Others Example could not do, His may; may it not?

Eubul. We will therefore consider the Actions of our Lord; than whom there never was, neither could be, a better Pattern in the World; and yet we shall find that none of them, from his Example merely, and without a Law, did lay an absolute Obligation upon us to imitate them.

1. *Some of them were Miraculous Actions*; and, as such, we are not bound to imitate them. For no Man is obliged to do those things, which are beyond the Powers which God ever gave him; or hath promised to bestow upon him. Such Actions as these are the accomplishments of the Son of God, above all others; neither hath he, nor ever will he impart the Abilities of doing the like, unless upon extraordinary occasions, and for the obtaining the chiefest Ends, the Glory of God and the Salvation of the Souls of Men, when they cannot reasonably be compass'd without such Miraculous Actings; as at the first spreading the Gospel they could not. But ordinarily, none will be thought deficient in their Actions, because they *turn not Water into Wine*; *Cure not Diseases with a Word*; *give not Eyes to the Blind*; *Legs to the Lame*; and *Life to the Dead*.

2. *Some*

2. *Some of our Lords Actions* were such as proceeded from *that Authority and Prerogative, which, as he was a Prince, did belong unto him.*

Of this sort was his *sending for the Ass and Colt, without so much as having the owners leave; or acquainting him with what he did, Matth. 21. 2.* As also *was his driving the Buyers and Sellers with a Scourge out of the Temple, and overthrowing the Tables of the Money-changers, Mat. 21. 12.* Neither are *These* to be imitated by us, as we are *private Men.* Whosoever shall take away that which is anothers, without his leave and licence, and shall use it as their own, will be guilty of Injustice. And so, whosoever as a private Person shall take upon him *Magisterially* to new *Model the Church* or the *Discipline* thereof, he usurps that Authority which is *due unto our Lord;* and is imparted to *some only,* who are *rightly called* thereunto. And he deserves the *Scourge* which our Lord made, rather than any Praise for his Actions in this kind.

3. *Some Actions of our Lord,* are such as *belong to his Mediatory Office;* by which he interceeds with God for Men, not in a *Submiss and Precarious manner,* but *by way of Covenant and Merit.* These we must not imitate. He that shall mediate with God, upon the account of his own Merit; as if he had done whatever was required of him to do; and also had supererogated, and so might claim, as of Right, a Reward to himself, and somewhat over and above, which he might impart to others, who have been deficient in their Duty, and could therefore expect nothing; such an one imitateth Christ no otherwise than to become a *Traytor* to him; and goeth about to *share in that Glory,* which our Lord will *not part with* to another. Nothing but *Submission* is to be shewn, and *Imperfection* acknowledg'd by us: For we have done in every thing less than was our

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Duty to do; and so must account ourselves less
than the least of Gods Mercies.

4. *Some Actions of our Lord are Moral; such as* respect Righteousness of Life; and *These we are to imitate.*

But yet These we are not oblig'd unto merely by
his Example.

Now These are such as may be reduced either to
the Law of Nature, or else to the Gospel, as particularly belonging thereunto.

Those Actions which he did, relating to the Law
of Nature, we also are to do; Such are the Wor-
shipping of God; the being just unto Men; Tem-
perate in our own Persons, and such like. But the
Law within us, which, as the Apostle saith, is writ-
ten in our Hearts, laid an Obligation upon us before
to do these things; and so the Duty of performing
them depends not upon his Example.

As for those Actions that purely relate unto the Go-
spel; How had we been bound by them, unless he
had said, *This I say unto you, This do ye?* Or how
could we have known that his Actions should have
been imitated, unless he had given Laws for the
doing the like? When we had seen him reproach-
ed, and bearing all Indignities without Endeavours
of vindicating himself, (though he had the power
of doing it,) small Encouragement there would have
been for our complying with his Example, had he
not said, *Resist not Evil; but whosoever shall smite*
thee on the Right Cheek, turn to him the other also,
Love your Enemies; Bless them that curse you;
Do good to them that hate you; And pray for them
that despitefully use you; that ye may be the Children
of your Father who is in Heaven.

Certainly, had there been only the Example of
our Lord, without any thing else, we should not,
Theophilus, have known how to interpret some Act-

ons. But if in the Example which he hath set, *his Will and Design should have been told*, the Matter of his Actions would have put on the Nature of a Law; and so, would have bound us to imitation, not as Example so much, as Law.

Whence I suppose, *Theophilus*, it is plain that the Example of none, no, (with Reverence I speak it,) not of our Blessed Lord himself, do, as of themselves, lay any Obligations upon us; and consequently our Imitation of Holy Men is to go no further than their Example hath the Divine Laws for its Rule and Warrant.

2. *The Perfection of the Laws of Christ which reacheth to all Moral Actions, and even to the Thoughts of our Hearts, sheweth us the same thing also.*

Nothing is there that is just and good, but the Precepts of the Gospel do enjoyn it: Nothing that is unrighteous, but is forbidden there. And in this sense in is that *the Law of God is said to be exceeding broad*, Psal. 119.

Now to say that there may be Examples of Goodness beyond what is included in the Laws of Christ, is to make those Laws imperfect, which *pierce in every thing even to the dividing asunder of the Soul and Spirit, and the Joynts and Marrow*; and which proceed from Him who is infinitely Wise, and so cannot be thought to be any way deficient.

But to say that such or such an Example is good, because it includeth in it that goodness which the Laws of our Lord do enjoyn, is to grant that the Law is Superiour to the Example; and, though there should have been no such Example, would have required the matter of it to have been done.

Theoph. But pray, *Eubulus*, what shall we think of the Example of the Church, in some things which we account necessary to be done from her Practice, when yet there is no Command in Holy Scripture for the doing them?

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them? I will instance only in *two things*, though I might in more; to wit, *The Baptizing of Infants, and the setting apart the First Day of the Week as Holy*. It may seem that either we are *mistaken*, when we press the *necessity* of these things; or else that there are *some things necessary* which the *Precepts* of our Lord do not reach unto.

Exbul. But yet, *Theophilus*, even in these things we are not swayed merely by the *Example of the Church*, without great *Reason* moving Her to the constant *Observance of them*. And though there be no direct *Command* for these things, yet if they may with *good probability* be *inferred from Holy Writ*; if there be a *Congruity in them to some Laws given unto the Jews*, so far as *Reason and Equity* enforced those *Laws*; and if there be likewise *some things in the New Testament*, that more than a little intimate the doing of them, we may observe them upon the *same Grounds* that the *Church observed them*, and not only from her *Example*. Though truly her *Example downwards*, even from her *First Age*, may add *Authority* to the *Considerations* now mention'd, in that she is a *Society* which above all others in the *World*, hath the *Aids and Direction* of the *Holy Spirit*, who is the *Guide unto all Truth*.

If we look upon your first Instance of *Baptizing Infants*, there is a *Command* that *all Nations should be Baptized*; God enlarging his *Covenant* to all *Mankind*, which was confined to the *Jews* before. Though truly, even the *Covenant* which was made with *Abraham* (of which *Circumcision* was the *Seal*), was of an *Evangelical Nature*, and belonged to him chiefly as he was the *Father of the Faithful*; and to his *Spiritual* no less than to his *Fleshly Race*. And if *Children* before, and in the time of the *Old Law* were capable of the *Covenant*, why not in the time of the *Gospel*, where is much greater *Love* manifested

fested unto Men, than ever there was in the Jewish State? And while Divine Love is more abundant to all Sorts and Conditions of Men, shall poor and helpless Children suffer a Diminution in it? Especially when our Blessed Lord was pleased to *take them in his Arms*; to *rebuke those that kept them from him*; and to pronounce that *of such is the Kingdom of Heaven*. There is so much cause to think that the Priviledges of Children are not only continued, but increased under the Gospel; that to make us to be of another Mind, it may seem necessary that there should have been a *Command on purpose* not to Baptize them. And what Prejudice, think we, would it not have wrought in the Jews towards Christianity, if their Children, who were taken into Covenant *under Moses*, should have been excluded the Covenant *under Christ*? Or, should it be said that God hath Mercy in store for them, as Infants, why, if the *inward Grace* be vouchsafed unto them, should the *outward Seal* of such Grace be denied them; who, if they be fit for the Kingdom of Heaven, are sure not unfit for the Font?

As for your *other Instance* of *setting apart* the *First Day of the Week as Holy*; Natural Religion will tell us, that some time is to be allowed to the Service of God: And Revealed Religion hath acquainted us, that God, by a Command to the Jews, (the Reason of which is fetch'd from the very beginning of the World,) had determined the seventh part of Time to be continued as his own Peculiar; The Equity of which Portion of Time, (in that it respected the *Resting of Cattel* as well as of *Men*,) the Church still owneth, as not knowing a better than what God himself had appointed.

But the Day of Christs Resurrection, by reason of the Exceeding Greatness of Gods Power and Love shewed in it, surpassing that Day which immediately

diately succeeded the Creation; and having been signalized by the Apostles, and other Believers meeting together upon it; not once by Chance; or another time as it happened, but frequently by Choice; Our Lord also honouring their coming together, by his own Presence, and by the wonderful Presence of the Holy Ghost sent upon them on that Day; and its being probable likewise, that the Observation thereof was by the Order of the Apostles; or otherwise there would not have been such early Discipline, as the Laying by in Store Collections for the Saints on that Day; nor would the Day itself, in so short a time, have been established throughout the whole Church, still every Hour encreasing; and further, it being no less probable, that except the Apostles had in this thing sufficiently understood the Will of their Lord, they would not have been the Authors of the Change of that Day, which, for Reason of Equity, as well as Ceremony, was so strictly observed for so many Ages in the Jewish Church; we may *upon these accounts*, and others such as These, and *not from the Churches Example only*, acknowledge the setting apart of the first Day of the Week, to be of great Moment. And the more, in that the *Two great Adverse Parties* to Christianity, the *Jews* and *Heathens*, were so rightly opposed hereby. In the Observing one Day in Seven, the first Christians ran counter to *the Heathens*; by the acknowledging *Him to be their God, who in Six Days made the World, and Rested the Seventh*: In the keeping Holy the *First Day* of the Week, they profess'd openly, against *the Jews*, that they worshipp'd God, not as a *Redeemer out of Egypt*, but as *the Father of Jesus Christ, who on that Day Rose from the Dead*; and was our Redemption in so wonderful a Manner, as that the Redemption from *Egypt* was only a *Shadow* of it.

In both your Instances, *Theophilus*, there is indeed the Practice of the Church, but then there is a great deal more beside; so much as sheweth, that in great probability, and in the best Judgment she can make, they are things of more than Ordinary Consequence; and to be Solemnly Observed by all who would sincerely approve themselves unto God.

And not unlike, possibly, may be said in some other things which we have the Church's Example for, but no positive Command from God: For her Example is founded upon such Rational and Religious Considerations, and so Consonant unto the Divine Laws, as do affix very much Honour to her Practice; and do Recommend it as necessary, if not in the Highest Degree, yet so as not to be disobey'd by Us, nor thrown off by Her.

So that we may conclude, that in the imitating of any Example, we are to have respect to the Law, and to the Testimony; to Examine it, whether it be Repugnant to the Rule or not, If it be Repugnant thereunto, how Specious soever it may seem, and how much soever Cried up it be, we must by no means imitate it. The Perfection of the Gospel Laws forbids it.

Theoph. It seemeth very agreeable to Reason and Truth what you have said. And would you therefrom (as you well may,) give some particular Judgment of the Examples in Holy Writ, I should account it among your kindnesses to me.

Eubul. That Admirable Person, Dr. *Sanderson*, in his Lecture *De Piorum Exemplis*, hath done what you desire: But that our Walk may not want Discourse, and that I may not seem unwilling to gratifie you so far as I am able, what I can remember from Him, and think of elsewhere, that will be pertinent, you shall have.

There is no need of saying any thing of those *Actions* which in Holy Scripture are *Sentenced as Evil ones*. How good soever the Actors otherwise have been, such their Doings have evidently been Breaches of Gods Law, and so are by no means to be imitated.

But then for other Examples we may say,

1. That Those which have *no Mark of Condemnation put upon them, are not thereby presently to be drawn into Imitation*. For Holy Penmen shewing themselves Faithful Historians, in delivering Matters truly, but not taking upon them the Persons of Judges, in Condemning every thing that is amiss, some of these Actions possibly *may be* against the Laws of our Lord. *The Drunkenness of Noab; Lot's offering his Daughters to the abuses of the Sodomites; Joseph's Swearing by the Life of Pharaoh,* and such like, are not Condemned, but who will say they are to be Imitated?

Nor Secondly, *are these Examples which have Praise given to them, without further search to have our Imitation*.

Some of them were *Extraordinary Actions*; (as was *Phineas's* Smiting the Man of Israel, and the *Midianitish* Woman, in the Act of Whoredom, through the Belly with a Javelin,) and so, are not to be extended beyond the Time and Circumstances in which they were done.

Some of them were *Mixed Actions*; only in one part of them Praiseworthy; in the Other against the Laws of our Lord. Such was the *Midwives Example* in speaking of the Hebrew Womens Childbirths, *Exod. 1. 19*. As also was that of the *Unjust Steward*, *Luke 16. 8*. A Lye there was in the One as well as Piety; and Injustice in the Other as well as Prudence. And we are taught that even the *Glory*

of God is not to be promoted by our Lye ; and that no Evil is to be done that good may come thereof.

Thirdly, Nor yet are those Actions, which have been in order to Signal Ends, and by the especial Providence of God have attain'd those Ends, an absolute Warrant for our imitating them.

I instance in the Fact of *Jacob* and his Mother *Rebecca*, in the getting the Blessing from *Esaú* the Elder Son.

A Promise God had made to *Rebecca*, that the Elder should serve the Younger : And on *Jacob's* having the Blessing of his Father, the Welfare of the whole Race which proceeded out of his Loins, and was the chosen People of God, might seem in a manner to depend. The Blessing is sought for through deceitful Means, and is obtain'd. The Father, when he knoweth of all, doth not reverse the Blessing, as seeing the Hand of God in the thing ; and God confirmeth the Blessing to *Jacob* and his Posterity.

The Manifest and Strong Providence of God, in this Example, will not Authorize our doing like unto it, though in concerns (if such there could be,) altogether as high and great as These were.

The Reason is, The Expressions of Gods Will through Christ in the New Testament, are to be preferr'd before the Instances of his Providence in the Old. His Providence can order the irregular Actions of Men unto Ends that are good ; and by them can bring about those things which he hath design'd. But His Will cannot, by reason of its Perfection, command any unrighteous Deed to be done, as if his End could not be obtain'd without it. And His Will in the Gospel being fully and clearly reveal'd by Him who was in the Bosom of his Father, and so knew his whole Mind, That Will of his is now to be our Rule, and esteemed by us, in our Practice, before any Actions

ings of his Providence; either that have been heretofore, or that shall be hereafter.

This we may do; improve, so far as in us lies, the evil Actions of others, into the good of ourselves and them, and to the Glory of God: For in so doing we shall imitate the Wisdom and Providence of God, which is holy: But we may never do evil Actions ourselves, nor encourage others to do them, upon the account that God hath made them sometimes instrumental to good Ends. For they are not in themselves a jot the better for the having been thus used to those Ends. God hath indeed in his Wisdom well *improved* them; but in his Holiness he never *approved* of them. And his Will in the Laws of his Son, is, and always will be, highly dear unto him: And therefore, in all cases, how little hopes of success soever there be, and, at all times, how hazardous soever they may appear, is to be stuck unto by us.

4. *Those Actions which under the Old Testament were altogether innocent, are not all of them, without scruple, to be imitated by us, who are Christians.*

Such, I suppose, was Moses's slaying the Egyptian, who strove with the Hebrew Man, *Exod. 2. 12.* Ehud's running his Dagger into Eglon, *Judges 3. 22.* Elijah's calling down Fire from Heaven, for the consuming of the Captains and their Fifties, *2 Kings 1. 10.* David's causing the Ammonites to be put under Saws and Harrows of Iron, and to pass through the Brick-Kiln, *2 Sam. 12. 31.* And his cursing his Enemies, as, in his Psalms, we frequently hear him do.

In some of these Instances, if not in all, we are to look to an extraordinary Spirit (yet not disagreeing to the Mosaick State,) impelling the Actors; and therefore it is very unsafe to bring them to the common Rules of Life now under the Gospel.

It might justly be objected against a private Man that should go about to do as *Moses* did, *Who made thee a Ruler or a Judge over us?* And *Ehud's Deed*, how little Warrant is it for Attempts of the like Nature? We know whom our Lord checked, for desiring they might do as *Elias* had done, with these words, *Ye know not what Spirit ye are of: The Son of Man came not to destroy, but to save*, Luk. 9. 54. And *David's Carriage* towards the Conquer'd *Ammonites*, who will say it may, to the worst of Enemies, be imitated? And his so frequent Execrations of his Enemies, may they not be said to proceed from a *Prophetick Spirit*, and to be *Predictions* wrapt up in the Form of a Curse? But who now may pretend to such a Spirit? And not having the same Spirit, how may they presume to do the same thing?

Look we to the Rule under the Gospel; and there we shall find the *Precepts* that are given us to be of a *mild and soft temper*; and the Spirit, that animates those Precepts in our Souls, to be gentle and sweet-natured: Not unlike unto the Dove, whose Resemblance he took, when he descended in a *Bodily Shape*. We are to Love our Enemies; to Bless them that Curse us; to do good to them that hate us. And Servants and Inferiours are to be subject to their Masters and Superiours; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. It is not unworthy Observation, that in the whole Gospel there are no Precepts that relate to the carrying on a War, because if our Saviour's Laws be obey'd sincerely on all Hands, there will be no occasion for Fighting.

Now where the State and Laws are New, (as under our Lord in great measure they are,) some things that were innocent and commendable under a former State, may not be so unto us. For these Laws are to last so long as the World standeth; where-

as the Laws that authorized some of those Examples (even now spoken of,) were only *Impulses of the Spirit for that time alone in which they were done*. Yea, the Laws which were most properly belonging to the *Mosaick Institution*, and endured the longest, were in great measure but in order unto our Saviour's more perfect Institution, which was to come; and which is styled *The Everlasting Gospel*, because its Laws shall never cease to bind us, as was before observed.

5. *No Actions of Holy Men, that express not the Substance of a Divine Law, are necessarily to be imitated by us.*

For if our Imitation of Examples, in Sacred Writings, be to have the Laws of Christ for its Rule and Guidance, then those Examples which do not any way express those Laws, although they be not contrary to them, lay no Obligation upon us for our imitating them. Hence that *Posture* which our Saviour and his Disciples were in at the first Institution of his Supper, since it was not belonging to the *Substance* of the Command of their Consecrating Bread and Wine, and Giving them; and of others Receiving them at their Hand, doth not oblige us.

There is none can understand any *Posture* from the Command, *Do this in Remembrance of me*; and there is no Command on purpose for any *Posture* to be observed: Why then should there be so much Discord in the Church of Christ about it? It were well we could not say, Men more earnestly contend about an indifferent Circumstance of the Duty, than they make Conscience of the Duty itself.

And from what hath been said, *Theophilus*, we may see how great and dangerous their Error is, who raise Examples so high, as to make them, together with the Laws of our Lord, the Rule of our Actions;

Actions; when those Laws alone, and of themselves, are so.

Nothing, say they, is to be done, but what is *warranted by some Command or Example in Holy Writ*. Which, what is it but a derogating from the Divine Law, to add over-much unto Examples; and to give some Men, who have their Eyes too much set upon Examples, an occasion therefrom to take oftentimes a greater Latitude than the Sacred Precepts will allow?

When the Law of God is *silent* as to any particular Action, and doth *not forbid it*, it is to be supposed we are left at liberty to do, or not to do it. Neither need we seek to an Example for our Warrant; but *our Prudence*, with respect only to that general Law, *Whatsoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God*, is to be *our Guide*. For those Examples, which are not directly expressive of the Laws of God; arose at first from *the Prudence* of the Agents; and why may not *We*, upon the same Grounds, do the same Things? Or why should an Example be of more Authority with us, than that Prudence from which it sprung, and which lieth *in common to all Men*, for the ordering a great part of their Lives?

Certainly the wholly excluding the Dictates of Prudence, where no Law of God layeth any prohibition upon us; and the joyning of Examples together with the Divine Precepts, without any mark of Difference, as if they were of equal sway with them, *may be of pernicious Consequence* to the Practice of Men; and hath *already* been, too too much, *instrumental* unto the quarrelling with the wholesome Discipline and Constitutions of our Church; and the disturbing of *that Peace*, which ought to be more among Christians than others; but which hath been *less* in the midst of them, than it hath been, even

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with

196 *The True Nature of the Divine Law,*
with Those, who, in the *Psalmist's* words, are
Strangers unto Peace.

Theoph. But if Examples lay no Obligation upon us, any further than as they have the Laws of Christ for their Rule and Warrant, pray, *Eubulus*, of what use are they? And to what end have we any thing more in Holy Writ, than the Laws thereof? These of themselves engaging us to all the Duties that any Examples can point us unto.

Eubul. We may say with the Apostle in general, That all the Examples in sacred Scripture, yea, even those that are bad, as well as those that are more commendable, (for they were all ordered by the self-same Spirit to be set down there,) have their good uses; and are profitable either for Doctrine, or for Reproof, or for Correction, or for Instruction in Righteousness; that the Man of God may be thoroughly furnished to every good work.

But more particularly we say,

1. That those Examples, which plainly bear the Image of the Laws of Christ, are given us for Incentives and Encouragements of our Obedience to those Laws.

Though our Rule be perfect, yet it will more prevail upon us, when it brings an Example with it, to shew that it hath been obeyed by others, and may be by us.

We are apt to think that our Task is difficult, and beyond our Strength. In Mercy therefore and Love, God hath been pleased to Register the Actions and Lives of some Men, to shew us, that what he requireth of us, is not impossible to be done. Why should we think it an hard thing to have Faith in God, when *Abraham* hath believed in Him, and taught, that it is a Duty which may be performed by us? Why should we esteem it unreasonable
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to be patient in Adversity, when we Read of the *Patience of Job* in greater Evils, than as yet we have suffered, or are like to suffer? We may Cheerfully set about the Duty of Mortification, and Self-Denial, from the knowledge of *St. Paul's keeping under his Body, and bringing it into Subjection.*

But the Chief Example of all is our Blessed Saviour Jesus Christ. And God hath required his Obedience both Active and Passive, not only that he thereby might Merit for us, but also that he might Manifest the Reasonableness of his Laws; and might Excite our Obedience by his own Example.

Who can justly refuse to be *Meek and Lowly*, when He, who Commands us to be so, was so Himself, though he were a King? Who is it will deny to *Love his Enemies*, when our Lord, who enjoyns us thus to do, did the same thing; yea Loved Us ourselves, when we were Enemies unto Him? That we should not be *Wearry nor Faint in our Minds* under the Troubles that may befall us for Religions Sake, we are bid to consider Him, who endured such contradiction of Sinners against himself; and to look unto *Jesus the Author and Finisher of our Faith*; who for the Joy that was set before him, endured the Cross, despising the Shame.

And what greater Allurements can there be, for our Obedience to his Laws, than that He, who made these Excellent Laws did himself Live according unto them; and was in all respects such as he would have US to be? If his Commands move us not, how can we withstand his Example?

Theoph. His Example is Strong: But may not the Perfection thereof (he being God as well as Man,) make us despair of ever reaching it, rather than encourage us to endeavour towards it?

Eubul. In case any should so think, God hath afforded us Patterns amongst Those who have nothing

but what is Human in their Natures; and *we are to be followers of Them, as They have been of Christ.*

Though truly Those Actions of our Lord, which belong'd unto him chiefly as he was a Man, (such as were the Expressions of his *Meekness, Patience, Self-Denial, Affiance in God, and such like,*) we may imitate immediately from Himself; and have no need that any should interpose betwixt Us and Him, as an Example of the same things. For who can Practise those Vertues and Graces in a manner more besitting our Imitation, than He hath done? He was made in the likeness of Men; and was in all points Tempted even as we are; so that we may exactly see our own Duty in his Behaviour. Only He was without Sin; and though we cannot, while we are in this World, attain unto the Perfection of being wholly free from Sin, as He was, yet it is but meet the Copy which is set us should be Exact and Accurate: That thereby we might not rest in Low Degrees, but might still be excited to rise higher.

Nay, even those Actions of our Lord, which proceeded more from his Divine than Human Nature, are, for the most part, not so much out of our reach, but they may yield us something for our Imitation. And they were not Written barely as Narratives, without any respect to our Practice. They carried in them a Conformity to the Laws which he gave; and we are excited to give Obedience to those his Laws, in that while he *acted most like God,* he had a respect unto Them; and did then express the matter of Them, as well as when he *acted most like Man.*

In his Miraculous Actions, there were the *Piety,* the *Kindness,* and the *Compassion,* which he requires of *us as Men,* mixed with his *Power* as he was God, And so far they are Incentives to our Duties. We cannot indeed *feed a Multitude* by a Miracle, but we
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can give *Food* to the *Hungry*, according to our *Abilities*. We cannot *Heal the Sick*, by a *Word*, but we can *Administer to their Necessities*; We cannot make the *Lame to Walk*, and the *Blind to See*; but we can be *Egs to the One*, and *Eyes to the Other*, in *our way*; by giving *Support and Direction* to them. Unto this *Goodness and Pity*, these *Miraculous Actions* of our Lord do prompt us; and hence the *Church of Christ*, though it could not reach the *Miracle of our Lords Fast for Fourty Days*, yet thought itself bound to the *Piety* of it; and as far as it well could, to the *Abstinence* of it also.

So likewise his *Actions*, which proceeded from his *Prerogative* as he was a *Prince*, (which I said we must not imitate,) have something that may admit of an *Analogy* betwixt our *Actions* and Them: And may stir us up unto that *Practice*, which we as *Christians* are bound unto. Thus his *Driving the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple*, and overturning the *Tables of the Money-Changers*, encourageth us to be *Zealously affected in a good Matter*; and to oppose every thing that is *Evil*, so far as lieth in our *Sphere*. Thus also his *Mediatory Actions* may be *Excitements* to us earnestly to interceed with *God* for the *Eternal Welfare of Others*, in an *Humble and Submissive way*; not forgetting our own *Meanness* while we do it; and remembering also, that what we do in this kind is no more than what is our *Duty* to do.

You see, *Theophilus*, that our *Lords Example* even in the *Actions* that are *above the Ordinary Level*, as well as in those which chiefly represented his *Human Nature*, is a *Motive to Us* for *Obedience* to his *Laws*.

I may further also say, *viz.* That not only the *Examples of some Holy Mens Actions*, in *Sacred Writings*, which as to the whole were good; but Those also, which, as to some things, are short of the

measure, and below the Standard of Goodness, are written for the stirring us up to our Duties: Though (as I before said,) they are not presently, and without further Consideration to be drawn into Practice. Of this sort are those Actions which are of a *Mixed Nature*, and are *Commended*. Only this we must be sure to do; to have an Eye to that alone in the Examples, which is Praiseworthy; avoiding the Other part of them. The *Goodness* and *Mercy* of the Hebrew Midwives may excite us, in different occasions, to the like *Virtues*; but so only, as to joyn *Truth* with them. And from the Prudence of the Unjust Steward we are encouraged to be *Prudent*, yet not so as to follow him in his *Unrighteousness*.

This is one end of Scripture Examples, which are Expressive of the Laws of Christ, to be Incentives and Encouragements to our Obedience.

Theoph. Were it not to hinder you, I would give you my thanks for the good insight into Examples you have already afforded me: But I will not be your let.

Eubul. I had much rather your share in the Discourse had been larger; that I might have had better occasion to give the like thanks to you: Though I complain not of the Burden, if so you can find any thing of Satisfaction therefrom.

A Second Use of Examples in Holy Writ is this: That if some of the Divine Laws be question'd as to their Sense, These, upon occasion, may be Interpretations of them.

We may instance, *Theophilus*, in the Law against Swearing. *I say unto you, Swear not at all, Matth. 5.* Some you know do from hence Condemn all Swearing whatsoever. And therefore they will refuse the taking of an Oath, though Solemnly by the Magistrate, in things of great Consequence, required to do it.

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But that Swearing is not simply unlawful, but only as it is lightly used, and in ordinary Conversation, we have the Example of St. Paul to testify, who, to confirm the Truth of God, in his Epistles, doth seriously bind it with his Oath. God is my Witness, saith he, whom I serve with my Spirit, in the Gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you all in my Prayers, Rom. 1. 9. God is my Witness; which is an appealing to Him, or an invoking of Him, as a Witness of the Truth of what he saith. So Gal. 1. 20. Now the things that I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. And we have the same Reason to be assured, That these Oaths were as rightly made, as the Things which he spake were truly spoken. For the same Holy Spirit dictated both the one and the other.

Neither can I say, that we have not the Example of our blessed Saviour himself in this present Case, Mark 8. 12. Ἀπὸ ἀπορίας, Ἐγὼ ῥησὶς ὑμῖν; Verily I say unto you, if there shall a sign be given to this Generation. Which though rendered by our Translators, There shall no sign be given, &c. yet it is observed by learned Men to be the same kind of expression with that of Heb. 3. 11. Ὡς ὁρκισάμην ἐν τῇ ὀργῇ μου, Ἐὰν ἐισέλθοιεν εἰς τὴν ἀνάπαυσίν μου. As I swore unto them in my Wrath, If they shall enter into my Rest. And with that of Ezek. 14. 16. Ζῶ ἐγώ, Ἐὰν οὐκ ἴδω ὑμᾶς ἐκ χειρὸς μου. As I live, If their Sons or Daughters shall be delivered: Which is an abbreviated or imperfect Form of an Oath, very usual among the Hebrews, and in these Instances may imply thus much: If their Sons and Daughters be deliver'd, Let me not be termed the Living God. If they shall enter into my Rest, If a Sign shall be given to this Generation, Let me be accounted false, never, in what I say, to be believed more. What seeming Difficulty then there is in our Saviour's

Saviour's Command against Swearing, here, in great probability, his own, but, in certainty, the Example of the Apostle, taketh it all away. And as this Law is cleared by an Example, so many other Divine Laws in like manner.

A third Use of Examples is, *That we may be thereby instructed to do our Duties in a decent and becoming manner.*

For it is not an unfrequent thing, that even good Actions may lose something of their Beauty, by a less comely, and not well managed, performance. It is sufficient, that the Divine Laws provide, that those things which are righteous and good should be done by us, and that the contrary should be avoided; but they cannot be expected to go so low, as to enjoin all the Particulars of Decency.

Now herein the Examples of Holy Men may be of use; and, by their ways and circumstances of doing Duties, may be a good light unto us, of more advantageously accomplishing what we are commanded.

St. Paul did his Duty, in his constant asserting of the Faith of Christ; But it was *the Decency of his Duty*, when styl'd a Madman by Festus, he gave the Governor the Title of *most noble Festus*; (as if he had been obliged, rather than injured by him;) and with a *calmness* affirmed, That he *spake forth the words of truth and soberness*, Acts 26. 25. With a less obliging Carriage he might have been faithful to the Religion which he profess'd; but, as he then acted, he added Comeliness to his Fidelity.

Instances many more might be given, but Mens particular Cases may better find them out, and more appositely apply them.

I must confess, *That the welfare of a Man's Soul doth not depend upon the outward Decency of his Actings, but upon the inward Sincerity of them; which*

which of itself carrieth a true Beauty with it in the Eye of God, who seeth not as Man seeth. But yet it must not be denied, that even Virtues and Christian Graces may be more acceptable unto Men, when they are decently exercised. And if, by bringing such a *Comeliness* to them, we can *insinuate* them into the Hearts of others, and make them spread the wider, I am sure we shall receive a much greater Reward with God, than upon the account of *Naked Sincerity* we should do. *They that turn many unto Righteousness shall shine as the Stars for ever and ever, saith the Prophet Daniel; and a Comeliness in acting Virtues is highly instrumental to the thus turning them.*

Now this Decency of doing Duties, is oftentimes learnt sooner from the Examples of others, than from the lonely Dictates of a Man's own Prudence. And, possibly, with respect unto this, as well as unto Virtue itself, was that excellent Rule of the Heathen, *of proposing to ourselves the Examples of Persons eminent for Wisdom and Goodness.* Think, saith he, *how Plato would have done in such a Case, how Epaminondas would have carried it.* And to this End also Examples may be recorded in Holy Scripture, *That we might thus be Followers of them, and might mark those who have so walked, for a more comely deportment in our Duties.*

But, *Theophilus*, Let the benefit of Examples in Holy Writ should wholly accrue unto *Us*; and They who set us these excellent Patterns should now have no Concern in them: Therefore,

Fourthly, *They were Registered there in Honour unto Those, who were thus Exemplary unto Others.*

It is said of *Mary Magdalen*, for her pious Action of pouring the Box of Ointment on the Head of our Lord, *That wheresoever the Gospel should be preached in the whole World, there also should this*
that

that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her, Mat. 26. 13. In the same manner are the good Actions of Holy Men preserved in the Scripture, that they may be told as a Memorial of them, wheresoever these Sacred Writings shall come, and so long as they shall last, which shall be to the End of the World. *Moses* shall for ever be celebrated, *who refused to be called the Son of Pharaoh's Daughter, choosing rather to suffer Afflictions with the People of God, than to enjoy the Pleasures of Sin for a Season.* *Abraham's* Faith shall never cease to be praised, till Faith itself shall cease, and be turned into Vision. *Gideon, Barak, Sampson, Jephtha, David* also, and *Samuel*, and all the Prophets and Apostles, shall, for their faithful Deeds, be had in Everlasting Remembrance; Such Honour have all God's Saints. And though they be happy in the enjoyment of the Recompence of Reward, and may seem not to need any of that praise which Earth can give, yet surely it cannot but be esteemed an high Favor from God unto them, while they are Blessed in Heaven, to be Honourable on Earth; and Celebrated themselves here, while they are praising God there.

Had we ourselves, *Theophilus*, no use and benefit from these examples, yet their being Registered, as an Honour to the Persons that lived so well, is sufficient reason for their being written. Though, truly, in this their Honour, we may reap a great deal of satisfaction. For those Righteous Actions which God hath so much honoured Them for, we may justly conclude, He will be well pleased with in Us; Since He is no Respector of Persons; in every Nation, be that feareth Him, and worketh Righteousness, being accepted with him. 'Tis true, indeed, we cannot expect that God will give Divine Authority to any more Books than the Bible; and write our Names in them. But He hath other ways of Rewarding Holy Livers
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on Earth, besides enrolling them in a Sacred Volume that shall last as long as the World. He can give us Honour and Prosperity while we Live; and can Embalm us also in a lasting Name when we are dead. And though he should not do this; yet we read of *another Book of God*, in which the Names, and all the good Actions of Faithful Men are recorded; and which at the last day will be opened, when *every man shall receive according to his works*. The Righteous Deeds of Holy Men, being preserved in the *Books of Scripture*, may put us in mind of this *other Book*: And the Honour which they have of being never forgotten in this world, encourageth us to the like Holy and Just Actions, that we may be remembered in the world to come.

Theoph. God grant we may at last be remembered there, and then I shall little care, though the same Earth that covers my Body, bury my Memory also. Though yet the Honour of Living in Sacred Writings after Death, and of being made instrumental to other Mens virtuous Deeds, and to the more comely performing of them, I acknowledge to be very great. And since God is pleased to make a Good Name, and the Being, for Ages, Exemplary, to be a Reward of a well-led Life, I will not blame Those, why by rightly ordering their Lives, have an Eye to such a Reward.

Eubul. I am sure we have a great deal of Reason to account it a Blessing, that we have had so many patterns of Virtue set us; by which we are the better capacitated for being Happy ourselves, and being also Examples unto others.

The Faith indeed of *Abraham* is thought by some to have been the more excellent, and even to have given him the Name of *the Father of the Faithful*, upon the account that he had no *precedent Example* of any ones Believing in God; He dwelling in
Us

Ur of the Chaldees, where they were all Idolaters.

But supposing this were so; and that therefore our Faith cannot have the accomplishment of Father *Abrahams*, because we have Him and many Others our Examples; Yet our Condition, in our Faith, is much the more sure unto us than it would have been, if we had had none in whose steps we might tread. For who of us would have done as *Abraham* did? We may therefore praise God, in that he hath caused us to be Born into the World after so many excellent Persons, whose Examples may direct us further, than of our Selves we could have gone. And albeit we shall not have the Honour to receive others into our *Bosome*, when in Heaven, as *Abraham* doth; yet if we can the more easily have a place in *his*; and be our Selves, in some measure, Leaders of other Men thither, we shall have no reason to complain of any want of Happiness; but a great deal of cause to rejoyce that the way to Heaven was made so plain; and that we had so many encouragements in it not to faint. And with reference unto this, The Church hath piously ordered *that we should bless Gods H. Name, for all his Servants departed this Life in his Faith and Fear; Beseeching him to give us Grace so to follow their Examples, that with Them we may be partakers of his Heavenly Kingdom.*

Theoph. A great Esteem and Love, *Eubulus*, we may have for the Examples of Holy Men; but it must at last *End* in the *Esteem and Love* of the Laws of Christ; which include in them all the Good that the best Examples of Men ever have shewn, or can shew.

Eubulus. It must so, *Theophilus*; For all those actions of Men and Women famous in their Generations; The Practice of Righteousness and Mercy; of Munificence and Liberality; of Temperance and Sobriety; of unfeigned Devotion and Piety towards God (all of which, every Man hath a Tongue to praise,)

praise,) are but imperfect draughts of these Holy Laws. I say, imperfect Draughts; Because no Man (our Blessed Lord alone excepted,) hath ever yet risen to that height of Excellence, which they require. Very pleasing they are, as they are represented in the Lives of Good Men; though they there are not unlike a Beautiful Face, drawn to great disadvantage; and with many unbecoming Shades. But could we see them without failure, exprest in the demeanor of any Man, and had *Eyes clear* enough to behold them, we should confess, that they were a Sight too good for Earth.

However, in the commendable actions of Men, with the imperfections of Mortality, if we would but reflect thus; to wit, The Constancy of *that Man* is a pleasant thing to behold: The Righteousness of *this Man* is truly Comely; Mercy and Goodness *here* is a real Ornament to the Actor; Friendship and Kindness *there*, How amiable are they! The Flourishing of Society in Peace and Industry, and all publick Virtues; The Affections and Tenderneſs of Parents; The Submission and Dutifulness of Children; The Dwelling of Brethren together in Unity; And the Affability and Usefulness of Neighbors to each other; Who is it can look upon and not be highly pleased in them? But all These are nothing else but the Excellencies of the Laws of our Lord: And shall we not Reverence, shall we not Love them? If, I say, we would in the Laudable actions of Men, though much distant from the Perfection of the Laws of Christ, often cast our Thoughts upon those Laws; acknowledging the Beauty to belong unto them, which in all these things is really derived from them; it would be no more than a due Expression of Esteem and Love towards them; and, at the best, much ~~below~~ their Excellency.

Meet therefore, surely it is, when we have a Mind to do any thing, and have an Example of the same ready in Sacred Scripture, that we think not ourselves presently authoriz'd thereby to do it: Some actions, even of good Men, who are now happy in Heaven, having not been always, nor altogether, Good. Let us make the Precepts of the Gospel to be our Touchstone; and, by comparing the Example with the Rule, we shall quickly find whether it will hold good for our Practice or no. Choose we either those Examples of Holy Writ, which *in the whole*; or those, which *in some part of them*, are the Image of a Divine Law; and thereupon have a perpetual Rectitude. Yet, in these later, be sure to avoid that part of the Example, which is transgressive of the Command. As for those which had a Warrant only for the Time in which they were done, they lay no more obligation upon us now, than Circumcision and Sacrifices do; but are wholly to be shunn'd. And those which the Law of God is silent in, and which are therefore merely indifferent, we may justly esteem ourselves no more bound by them, than we are to wear a Seamless Coat; or to lye along every time we eat; unless *Human Laws* shall, upon Prudential accounts, enjoin the doing them.

And then for other Examples, *Theophilus*, not recorded in Scripture, They also are to be Examined by the Rule. If in any thing they deviate from the Laws of Christ, we are not to follow them, though they be grown the Practice of Many; and of some who may seem to be more Understanding and Religious, than most of their Neighbors. Always bearing in mind, that the *Best* have their Errors and Frailties; and that the most dangerous Errors in Religion are, for the most part, if not always, usher'd in with Semblances of Holiness more than ordinary;

ordinary ; which to wise Men do often betray themselves by being over-acted.

But the Divine Laws are in every respect sincere and perfect ; and will lead us into no paths but such as will undoubtedly bring us unto Happiness. They have no Interest to set up besides the Glory of God, and the everlasting Welfare of Souls : And will bear the being search'd into themselves, as well as they require that other things be proved by them. We may, through them, find out the failures of many specious Actions, and Pretences ; but may despair in any example to see those Excellences, which are not in far greater measures in *Them*.

And Thus, *Theophilus*, as well as I could, I have answered your Request. In the doing of which, I cannot reasonably be thought to have detracted any thing from Sacred Examples, by having made them wholly dependent on Sacred Laws. Were there generally a greater Caution used in *Those*, and a greater Love shewed to *These*, Men would walk more Surely Themselves, and would set far better Copies unto Others.

Theoph. I dare say, none of those Holy Men, who have left us their good Examples, would think those good Examples injured by what you have said : Since their greatest Care, in them, was to obey God's Law : And their greatest Pleasure, from them, was to have done it.

This your kindness, *Eubulus*, together with your other, shall, I hope, find that Entertainment with me, which you would wish : And, among the Virtues which they tend to promote, I will see that Friendship and Gratitude shall not be wanting.

DISCOURSE the Seventh.

The Contents.

CONCERNING the Divine Law, as taken in a larger Sense. Of the Historical part of Scripture; particularly of the Creation. All other Opinions concerning the Being of the World are cold and unaffecting. Of the Fall of Man. It gives Light to many things; which otherwise we should never have known the reason of. The sad effects of our Fall are in great measure corrected by God's Mercy, and made Comfortable to us. Many things in the dark, and mingled with falsities in profane Authors, we may from hence more clearly discern. Sacred History shews forth God's immediate Hand; and plainly tells us, that he punished and rewarded, for such and such reasons. Of the History of our Redemption. How wonderful it is; and what a Sacredness runs through all the Circumstances of our Lord's Conception; Birth, Life, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension. The great evidence of these things. Of the Prophetical part of Scripture. Especially of those Prophecies relating to our Blessed Saviour. As
Divine

Divine Truth is eminently seen in all of them; so the quick and various workings of Providence, for the fulfilling of some of them, are very delightful. The Predictions of the Heathen Oracles much different from these. The Sibyllin Prophecies of suspected Credit. Of the Adhortative part of Holy Writ. God hath used the most taking words for the prevailing with Men for Obedience. In the Gospel there is nothing wanting, that may work upon the Soul of Man. Of the Devotional part of Sacred Scripture. It consisteth of such Services as were fit for Men to pay unto their God; and needed not Secresie to shelter them from an Honest Ear, or Chast Eye. Devotion raised to a much greater perfection, by having our Lord and the Holy Spirit so nearly concerned in it. Those persons quite mistake what they read in Sacred Scripture, who find a pleasure therein without any respect to the Divine Law, properly as such. What we are to think of those, who are conscientiously Obedient to the Divine Law, but yet find not that Delight therein, which Earthly things do frequently give them; and who hereupon are very apt to interpret their Love to God's Precepts to be unsincere, and such as will be rejected. The great reasonableness and Benefit of Holy Meditation.

T H E O P H I L U S.

I Remember, *Eubulus*, that as by the *Word Law* you understood the Preceptive Part of the Bible, (which you have hitherto discoursed of) so you did not exclude from it, what ever else is contained in Holy Writ.

E U B U L U S.

YEs, *Theophilus*, we may in a larger Sense understand *this* also. And indeed since all Scriptures have, some way or other, a respect to the Precepts thereof, therefore the *Word Law* doth oftentimes import the *whole Scripture*; as is manifest in these places. *John 10. It is written in your LAW, I have said ye are Gods.* And *Cap. 12. We have heard out of the LAW, that Christ abideth for ever*; and *Cap. 15. It is written in their LAW, they hated me without a cause.* All which places are not in the Law properly so called, but in the Psalms. And I doubt not, but as the Psalms are called in a larger Sense Gods Law, so our Psalmists, in these words, *O how I love thy Law*, meaneth all that God by Divine Inspiration hath caused to be written; as well as the Law taken in the strictest signification.

Theoph. Give me leave to tell you, that I look not upon you to have done your task thoroughly, unless you deal with the other Parts of Holy Scripture, as you have done with that which is properly Preceptive.

Eubul. There is the less need of this, because if *That* be excellent, and amiable, in relation to us, the

the rest of the Bible, as being in order unto, and promotive of the Precepts there, (for so in reality it is,) must be Excellent and Amiable likewise; whether it be, *Historical* or *Prophetick*; *Adhortative* or *Devotional*, and to one or other of these,) *all* (except what we have already discours'd of,) or, at least, *the most* of what the Sacred Writings include, is reducible.

Theoph. If you would be a little particular herein, you would seem to me not to exceed the Bounds of your Discourse. Good *Eubulus*, begin with the *Historical part* of the Bible, which, for the great things it containeth, and the Faithful account which it giveth, doth, when ever I read it, afford me very great satisfaction.

Eubul. That the accounts of things are Faithful, and Written with a design of Truth, the Holy Writers not sparing themselves, but putting down their own faults, (as several of them in several places do,) is a very great Evidence. Such an Integrity cannot but be Loved, where from Historians having less respect to their own Reputation, than to the verity of things, a Man may be as well satisfied in his knowledge of the most Ancient Times, as he is in those which he Lives in, and sees with his Eyes.

Yea, such History may much the more engage his Love, when it gives him not merely the knowledge of the first Times, but *such a knowledge* as, to a good Man, puts a *Relish into All Times*; and will make the years pass more gratefully to the End of the World.

Look we, *Theophilus*, upon the account of the Creation of the World, which we may be certain was Written by Gods Immediate Appointment and Inspiration, for the exciting a due Fear and Love of Him; *i. e.* an Obedience to his Laws; and what Delight may we not conceive therefrom? While

the *Wise Men of the World* have in vain sought, how this goodly Fabrick of the Heaven and Earth, came to be such as it is; some of them affirming it to be *from all Eternity*, the same which we now see it; others determining it to be from a *lucky hit of Matter*, casually coming together into this Beauteous Form: We, amidst their Errors, can pity them; and the more enjoy the Truth, from the Ignorance and Darknes which these Searchers have been in.

But as the knowledge of a Truth which they could not reach unto, may upon that score be prized by us, so we may intermingle the greatest Love with our Esteem of it, because it gives us such a *firm support* throughout our Lives.

God who Created the World, did it not more to manifest his Power, than to express his Goodness unto Men, whom he made to enjoy it, and to be served by all things in it. And how *Cold and Unaffectioning* are the Other Opinions in respect of *this Truth*! Were the World such as it now is from all Eternity, altogether without a Deity, or with no Relation unto one, (which is the opinion of some Atheistical Men,) it could not give us the pleasure of thinking that it was the *effect of Divine Power and Love* to us. Nay, were it Eternal by a *necessary Efflux from the Goodness of a Deity*, which could not refrain from the thus exerting itself, (as the Platonists hold,) where would be the Favour? For that which cannot possibly be otherwise layeth no Obligation upon us. And should the World have risen merely by Chance, (as the *Epicureans* would have it,) there would this way also have been the *Total absence of Kindness*. For what hath *Chance* to do with *Kindness*, whose perfection it is to have the Understanding and Will along with it?

But now, in the History of the Worlds Beginning, we can behold the Love and Beneficence of the Great Creator;

Creator ; and with Pleasure can Contemplate Him, who makes his Goodness to be seen in every thing, though Himself be Invisible. So great a Priviledge is it to have the World founded in the Divine Power, Wisdom, and Love, that one who knows those things, and is a Virtuous Person, would not for a World that the World should be without them. *The Light would be a less pleasant thing to behold, should it not have been from Him who is the Fountain of Light.* And what pleasure would the Heavenly Bodies (whether those which we term *fixed*, or those, which (as Cicero speaks,) are *Vocabulo nonne errantia*, Planets not in reality but word only,) afford by their Motion and Influence, were it not from the Creators Order that they thus Move ; From his Care of us that they thus shed their Influence. Could we not say also concerning these Earthly Things, *That Manifest are thy Works, O Lord, in Wisdom hast thou made them all; the Earth is full of thy Riches; And, even concerning ourselves likewise, that Man was first formed by God, who breathed into him the Breath of Life; that, ever since, we have been fearfully and wonderfully made; and that in his Book are all our Members Written ;* both We and They should lose all our Excellence. For an Excellence wholly destitute of Wisdom, wholly destitute of Love, would be an empty thing, yea a meer Contradiction.

Theoph. It must needs be yielded that such History is Worthy to be Loved, on the Considerations you now mention'd ; and one Consideration more may be added ; viz. That though there be in some antient Authors, somethings not altogether unlike to this History, (they, in probability, having either seen Moses's Writings ; and so, out of design mingled Fictions with them, for the making an Opinion of their own ; or else heard an imperfect Relation of them ; and so, given us only some faint resemblances of

Truth, though the best they could,) yet none of them all do give that satisfaction to a Religious Reader, which *Moses* doth. He having been thoroughly instructed by the Creator himself for what he hath Written; and having given Confirmation also of its Truth by the Wonders which he wrought.

Eubul. It is not difficult to conceive, why, though even by *Natural Reason* it may be inferred, that the World owed its Form and Fashion to a Divine Power, there yet is such a defective account of the Origin of the Universe from the Philosophers of Old. For they, how^aever otherwise of good Knowledge and great Industry, relying altogether on the Experience of the Works of Nature; in which they saw that something was requisite for the production of another thing, could not imagine (that great expression of Omnipotence,) a Creation out of Nothing. But it is a great satisfaction to the Understanding to know that Nothing is too hard for God; and that it is but meet to believe, that He who had *Being* and *Life* in himself from all Eternity, could be the *Entire Author* and *Conserver* of *Being* and *Life* to all other things. And *Moses's* Words, viz. *God said, let there be Light, and there was Light,* and so in other things of the World,) were Expressions Worthy of his Almightyness concerning whom they were spoken; as signifying it was no less easie to Him to make the World, than to speak the Word.

That which in Sacred Story too quickly follows Mans being made in so happy a Condition, is *his falling from* it by the Allurements of Satan. But *even This* (though sad to relate,) gives us light in many things, which otherwise we should never have known the reason of. *As why the Earth is so much enclined to Bryars, Thistles, and Weeds: And why with so much*

much *Labour and Sweat* we must *Till it for our Bread*. Why Men are *naturally Prone to Evil*; and are so apt, against their Reason, to be led away by their Passions and Lusts. *Why Women*, in so much *Sorrow and Pain*, do bring forth Children; And why *all Men must Dye*, and are allowed, in respect of some other Creatures, so short a time to Live.

These things are taught by this Divine Book alone; and though there have been among the *Heathen Wise Men*, who have complained of them, yet they knew not what to ascribe them to, beside either *Hard Chance*, or *Hard Fate*. *Mankinds Transgressing* of a most equal and easie Command, and the *Corruption of our Nature* thereupon, and the Miseries and Death that followed as a Punishment unto all, in that all had Sinned, being, in Tract of Time, so far forgotten, that ('tis probable to Conjecture,) they would never, by any of them, have been thought of more.

But however this part of the History (as was said,) is sad to Relate, yet that which follows will give true cause of Comfort and Joy. For we are told, *That the Seed of the Woman should break the Serpents Head*. Through *That*, we are restored again to Gods Favour; and from this early promise, I suppose, it is, that He is termed *the Lamb that was slain from the Beginning of the World*. It is through Him, that the *Curse upon the Ground* is in great measure turned into a *Blessing*. *Bryars and Thorns* we can make a *Fence* of, for the securing the Fruits they would *Choke*. No Noxious Creature, no Venomous Herb, but is of *Excellent use* for the Welfare of Man; and even the *Threatning*, of our *Eating Bread in the Sweat of our Brow*, is no less a *Promise*, that if we Labour God will give us food. *Womans bringing forth Children* in Pain and Sorrow may be undergon with Cheerfulness, since They
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(and all Men also,) *shall be saved in Child-Bearing, i. e. by a Child which was to be born of a Woman.* Death may Cease to be *Terrible* to us, since of a Punishment it is made a *Passage to a better Life.* And *the Shortness of our Lives* in Comparison of the Lives of some other Creatures, need not be complain'd of; since this is the *whole of their Living*; of *ours* it is not: And a few years in this World, are, in Gods Sight, a sufficient Probation for an Eternal Life elsewhere. And truly the *Corruption of our Nature* may not deject us; since the *Laws of our Lord* (who is the Seed of the Woman,) being by a Divine Power set home upon our Hearts, will, unless it be our own faults, most certainly *correct it.* We hence likewise are certified who is our *irreconcilable Enemy*; how we are always to be aware of him; and to suspect his *Onsets*, though He be *invisible to us*: How yet, we may have *assurance* against him, in that *his Head is Bruised*; and, *if we resist him, he will fly from us.*

It would be altogether endless should I go about to remark all the Excellences of Sacred History; which, who is it can thoroughly do? The important Things hitherto spoken of, could not have been known without it; and therein it may claim our Love; some other things in Profane Authors, which are in the Dark and mingled with Falsities, we, from thence, may with a clearer Light discern: And herein likewise it may call for Respect as due from us unto it. I will instance in few of many, Mans being said, by Plato in his *Phadro*, to be at the first *ἀνδρόγονος*, of both Sexes, and afterwards to be cleaved in two, doth something resemble Eve's being taken out of Adam. Hesiod's Pandora who brought all sorts of Evil upon Mankind, bears some Analogy with our first Mother's being the Author of our Fall and Misery. Niobe's being turned into
Stone

Stone from Sorrow for the Destruction of her Children, may not amiss be referred to *Lot's Wife*, who looking behind her, contrary to Gods Command, to see what became of *Sodom*, where her Kinsfolks (and not improbable some of her Children,) were left, became a *Pillar of Salt*. And *Nisus's* Hair we may, with some allowances, derive from *Sampson*: These being in all probability the real Truths of those Fables. And who will doubt but the reputed Sacredness of an *Helicon* and *Pyrene*, and the Rapturous Vein said to be, by them conferred, did arise from the Well of Beer at which the Children of *Israel* in an inspired manner Sung; *Spring up, O Well; Sing ye unto it: The Princes digged, &c. Numb. 21.* The same may be said of several Rites used by the Heathens in their Temples and Sacrifices; which it is more than likely were fetched from Gods Service prescribed to the *Hebrews*: Nor this, as we may justly think, without the Craft of the Devil; who endeavours to lessen the Honour, which from them was to accrue unto God, by making them in other places to belong unto himself.

We further, *Theophilus*, may say this of the Old Testament History: That the larger Lines of it do evidently shew forth Gods immediate Hand, either in Justice or in Mercy; and plainly tell us that He punished or rewarded for such or such Reasons. Thus the Destruction of the World by Water was because the Earth was Corrupt before God, and filled with Violence. And the Saving of *Noah* and his Family, was because Him God had seen Righteous before him in that Generation. The like was there in the overthrow of *Sodom*; and the preserving of just *Lot*. Thus also in the affairs of *Abraham* and his Seed, the things of greater note leave us not to interpret doubtfully, whether it was a Chance that hap-
pened

pened unto them, or was Gods *manifest Power and Providence*. And truly there are such Contrivances from the Divine Wisdom in the managing and carrying on some particulars of this History, as if the Holy Ghost had design'd by the most *artful, and surprizing Methods* to engage our Affections. And when we read them we must be very incredulous, or very heedless, if our *Fear of God*, our *Trust in him*, and other such like Graces, be not stirred up, and exercised within us. It is impossible, a good Man should be taken with *any History, so much as with this*: Since by being Conversant in it, he doth not only, as it were, *Live in those Times*, with those Persons who were dear unto God; but doth likewise *before hand* become their *Friend and Intimate*, with whom he hopes to Live for ever, *in that City which hath Foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God*.

Theoph. I would not that the pleasure, (though great it be,) which you have excited in me from the History of the *Old Testament*, should make me forget that of the *New*. Dear, *Eubulus*, let not that pass without some Remarks from you also.

Eubul. There cannot be in the whole World what may more deservedly engage our Love than *That*. And what we have hitherto been speaking, though it be very taking, is yet much the more so, because a great deal of it hath a more *Spiritual meaning*; and is in Order to the *History of our Redemption*.

The Genealogies in the Old Law were of Civil use to the Jews, in more respects than one. But they may chiefly seem, by the Providence of God, to be so exactly Registred and Preserved, that the *Race of the Messias*, when he should come, should not be *unknown and confused*. And yet who can declare his Generation? So surpassing all others is it, how Glorious soever,

The Chief Matter of the Gospel Story is the Redemption of the world, by the Son of God's suffering in our stead; undergoing his Fathers wrath, that we might be partakers of his Love. And how delightful may such History be to us! From the depth of Bondage and Misery, to be asserted into the liberty of the Sons of God, and made capable, upon most excellent Terms, of everlasting Happiness, how may it affect us!

Our Redemption in itself is a thing Divinely Great. But the Method of accomplishing it, Who can sufficiently admire?

Though the Son of God, who was to work this mighty Favour for us, from all Eternity, *was*, and, to all Eternity, *will be*, God the Blessed; as far in his Godhead from being punishable for sinful Men, as Men in their sins are from being acceptable to a Just and Holy God; yet there is a way found out for him to undergo Pain and Punishment in our stead. God the Father hath prepared for him a Body, and, by his own uniting it with the Divine Nature, he can both Suffer and Dye. And in his being capacitated thus to do, Christ is, by way of Eminence, the Wisdom of God; as exceeding the deepest Conceptions of Men or Angels.

Neither may his History in other Circumstances, of his Coming into, Continuance in, and Leaving of, the World, less prevail upon us, for an Holy Admiration and Delight.

Highly wonderful was his Conception within the Womb of a Pure Virgin, by the Power of the Highest overshadowing her. And his Birth, from the multitude of the Heavenly Host praising God; from the Star's, being Created on purpose for the leading the wise Men from afar to worship him; Shew forth an Holy Lamp, and Splendor, order'd by Wisdom from above, as a Peculiar to Him alone, of all that ever were born into the World. One

One thing more is very apposite to the History of his Birth: That it was in a *Time of Peace* over all the World. The *Temple of Janus at Rome* was shut: And no noise of War disturb'd the Nations: This was the Hand of God, that He, who was styled the *Prince of Peace*, should then be born, when *Peace* was upon Earth. Especially, since the Laws he was to give, were not to make their way by *Force and Arms*; but were *calmly to be weigh'd*; and for their Reasonableness and Excellence to find entertainment in the World.

Theoph. But there were some Circumstances in his Birth, which were as remarkable for *their Meanness*, as these you have mention'd were for their *Greatness*. Such were his *Mothers* being of Low Degree; Her *bringing forth* her Son in a *Stable*; And the *First Message* of his Birth being made known to *Shepherds*: All of which may seem unworthy of his Person, as they are much of a different piece from what you but now spake.

Eubul. Yet in them all, *Theophilus*, there is no less Wisdom and Love seen, than in those things which were Splendid and Glorious.

What if the *Blessed Virgin* was not great in the World, She yet was of a very *Creditable Stock*; of no meaner an one than that of *David*. She yet was of *Spotless Innocence*, and of *Great Piety*; which are, in his Eyes, *who seeth not as men see*, of the greatest Price, and far beyond outward Grandeur. *Such Humble ones God will exalt, while the mighty shall be put down from their Seat.* And this was the Matter of the Blessed Virgins Praising of God, and rejoicing in him; and will be the Praise and Joy of the Meek and Lowly for ever.

His Birth was indeed at first made known unto *Shepherds*; and they were directed to the place where the young Child was; But had the Angels in
Heaven,

Heaven, and the Great ones on Earth been his only Attendants, the meaner sort of Men might have been *discourag'd*; as thinking that the Benefit of a Saviour was only, or chiefly there, where *State* and *Greatness* made way for it. But now, Meaner Persons, so they be Harmless and Industrious, (as these Shepherds, from their Calling, and their keeping Watch with their Flocks by night, appear to have been) are shew'd to be no less dear unto God, than those of higher Rank.

And Lastly, his being *Born in a Stable*, and laid in a Manger, doth manifest also that He was *truly Man*: Which would not have been so thoroughly discerned, had all things been of the *more splendid sort*. For where there is nothing but Grandeur and State, Men seem to themselves *to be*, and are permitted by God to *be called more than Men*, I have said *ye are Gods*. But the being of *Human Race* is never question'd where the Condition and Circumstances are Low. The things then that are meanest in our Saviour's Birth, afford us as much cause of Rejoycing, as those that are highest. Let a Jew call our Saviour Mean; we will not account it our Reproach; because he thereby acknowledgeth Him to be a Man; which we shall always esteem our Honour: We hereby are so pleased with the *low Condition* of his Mother; the *poor place* of his Birth; and the *inferior Attendants* about him; that we praise his Name for them; as being great assurances of our Interest in him.

If in his Life we read his *Infant-Obedience* to the Law; in being *Circumcised*; of his sitting in the Temple with the Doctors, Hearing, and asking them Questions. If his Baptism and Solemn Unction after it to his Office, by the Holy Ghost's descent upon him like a Dove, and the Voice from Heaven: If his Temptation in the Wilderness, and his Conquest over the Devil

Devil therein; What pleasurable Entertainment is there for Holy Thoughts! And whether we find him *Curing Diseases; Casting out Devils; Feeding Multitudes* with a Miracle; *Laying Command* on the *Wind and Sea*; and *Raising the Dead*: Or whether we read him *publicly Teaching*, or *privately Instructing*; *Praying in Secret* unto God; or appearing *Gloriously* in his *Transfiguration*; How diversly may we be affected, yet every way with Delight!

Yea, if we look towards his *Leaving of the World*, when, in the Garden, *he Sweat*, as it were, *great drops of Blood*, under those Sins which in a Garden first took Birth; If we consider his bitter *Cross* and *Passion*; the *Reproaches* amidst his Torments; and the *Death* that followed them; though we *Sympathize* with him, we yet cannot but *love* the Story. For herein, the wonderful work of our Redemption is compleated. Here we see a Sacrifice of more worth than a World; propitiatory for the Sins of all Mankind. Because, as Manhood was intimately conjoyned with the Godhead, and made one Person, He was Infinite who suffer'd; and so paid our Price in a short Time, which we ourSelves could not have done, but by an Eternity of Torments.

If we read on, and accompany our Lord *to his Grave*, we shall find him after a shameful Death, to be Honourably Buried; wrapped in *fine Linnen with Spices*; and laid in a *Sepulchre*, in which never any before was laid. And it may affect us with a secret Pleasure, to see Him, who was Conceiv'd within a *Virgin's Womb*, where no one Conceiv'd in Sin had before lain, to be Buried, as it were, in a *Virgin Sepulchre*, where no sinful Man's Body had ever been laid.

But what Joy may his *Resurrection* stir up in us, after such endeavours to secure his Body, if possible, from Rising; and, when Risen, to stifle the Truth
of

of its being so. It cannot but delight us to read of Angels descending from Heaven, to rowl away the Stone before the Sepulchre; and to attend upon our Lord in his leaving his Grave. And it may almost be a pleasant doubt, whether cheereth us the more, their so kindly speaking to our Lords Friends, that *These* went away, though with some fear, yet with great Joy; or their terrifying the insolent Keepers, that through Fear *Those* shook, and became as Dead Men. If we are taken with Splendor, we have it in the Angels appearance in Raiment white as Snow; And also in the Resurrection of many Saints; who, after their Saviour had left his Grave, came out of theirs, and went into the Holy City; and appeared unto many. If Love and Kindness please us, we have our Lord's frequent shewing himself to his Disciples, after his Rising: And though a Crown was ready for him in the Heavens, He yet cannot quickly leave Those, who once had left all and followed him; but continues among them Forty days, speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.

These great and delightful things are succeeded by His Ascension into Heaven; which is truly Great, and highly pleasant to a Religious Soul; Whether we consider the Cloud of Angels which received him: The Powers of Darkness which he led Captive; or the inestimable Gifts which he gave through the Holy Ghost: Gifts, which were worthy of him; and such, as no one else could bestow. And, what especially concerneth us, Our Nature, which was Created lower than the Angels, is in Him Exalted far above them. And to our Joy also we read, That He is gone to prepare Mansions for us, That where He is, there we may be also.

This sure, if any thing in the World can entitle History to the greatest Love, may well entitle this to Ours.

Abundance more there is in the New Testament, which I shall not now insist on, though it be exceeding Delightful. I thought good to recount that which more immediately related to our Redeemer; because it is of such unspeakable Value unto us.

Theoph. In the particulars which you have given of it, I have more than once thought of the words of *Seneca*. *Cum Sextium lego, libet omnes casus provocare. When I read Sextius's Book, I could even Challenge Fortune to do her Worst.* I have an Antidote there, greater than all her Mischiefs. What was height of Expression, concerning *Sextius's* Philosophy, is no more than Truth if applied to this History. When *Old Simeon* had taken our Saviour into his Arms, it was in good earnest that he said, *Lord, now lettest thou thy Servant depart in Peace according to thy Word; for mine Eyes have seen thy Salvation.* The World hath nothing worthy my Eye or Thought, after such an inestimable Favour. And, truly, when a Man, with a right frame of Soul, reads these things, what can his Heart desire more? How much may he be above all ordinary Joys! How much above all ordinary Grievs!

And yet, *Eubulus*, how much soever these great things tend to the composing of all irregular Passions in me, I cannot forbear the being very much disturbed, when I consider, there are *some* who look upon all these things as imposture; and have endeavour'd to beat them down as such. Surely were there no other Proofs, the Sacredness and Love, which all along breath in them, might shew them to be of higher Original, than what Deceit could reach unto. And could an understanding Man be tempted to doubt of their Truth, yet, methinks, they should so far prevail upon him, as the less to care whether any thing else were true or not.

Eubul.

Eubul. But God be thanked, *Theophilus*, we have the greatest proofs of these Things, for the Confirmation of our Faith; and for its, and our Defence, against all the Oppositions of Unbelievers, and the Carnal Reasonings of the World.

Why should the Evangelists and Apostles go about to deceive the World in things of so great Importance? Their whole design in making known the Gospel was, so far as can be discerned, none other than that Mankind should through it be happy. And what injury had the whole World done them, that they should in a matter which so highly concerned it, impose thus upon it; as they needs must have done, had they not been absolutely sure of what they declared?

Untruths, for the most part, look at the interest of the spreaders of them; and are always of a less extent; confin'd to certain Persons, or Places, or Times; and are not such as shall respect all Persons, Places, and Times, so long as the World shall endure, (as these things manifestly do,) unless there shall be a *most Envious and Evil Nature*; or an *inordinate design* of *Praise* or *Profit* in the Inventors.

But neither of these can be thought to have been in Those, who first published these things.

Not *an Envious and Evil Nature*; for who out of Envy would publish such things as all Wise and Serious Men would wish should be true, if really they were not so? Who, out of Evil Nature would write and declare Laws to the World, that should beget and propagate the greatest Sweetness of Temper? An happy effect of Envy it would be, to shew the Unspeakable Love of God unto us; and to instruct us in such a pureness of Devotion towards him, as becomes Creatures of Rational Souls to exercise towards their Creator, and infinitely Loving Father. To instruct us also in such an Amiability of De-

portment towards Men, as shall shew that they are heartily loved by us. These things cannot be the Design of an Envious and Evil Nature.

No, nor yet of wordly Praise or Profit. Not of Profit, for they taught the way of being Rich towards God : Of laying up of Treasures in Heaven ; which was the refusing the *Mammon* of Unrighteousness, by giving Alms to the Poor, and forsaking Houses and Lands for the Sake of Christ.

Neither were these *Politick Precepts* to Teach Men to despise these things, that the Teachers themselves might be the more enriched by them ; for They, by their own Example no less than by Precepts, had shewed that those wordly things were meanly to be accounted of ; *They forsook all and followed Christ.*

And surely they did altogether as little *design Praise to themselves* ; for all which they said or did, they spake and acted for the *Glory of God*. The *Pharisees* they Condemned for *looking after the Praise of Men*, *Matth. 6*. And others they infixed a Note of Discredit upon, for *Loving the Praise of Men more than the Praise of God*. They wrote down Precepts for the avoiding of applause in our good actions ; yea so far were they from the seeking after Praise themselves that they Registred their own, and Companions Failings. At the Betraying of Jesus, *all his Disciples* cowardly *forsook him and fled*, *Matth. 26*. And this is writ *by one* who himself *forsook him* and fled as well as the rest. And *St. Peter's denying* of his Master, is at large described by *St. Mark*, who was his Intimate and Friend. And the whole is approved of by *St. Peter*, who had the viewing of *St. Mark's Writings*, and (as is thought by some,) did dictate the Matter of them.

From these considerations, there is no reason to think, that the Penmen of the New Testament wrote Falshoods, or things that they did not thoroughly know to be true.

Add to these the unlikelyhood, that poor Fishermen (for such the Disciples as to the greater part were, and the rest not much better,) *could* raise such a Story of their own Heads; so agreeable to the Predictions of the Old Testament, and yet false; or that they *would have* done it, so contrary to the expectation of the Jews, and to their own expectation also, a little before: Who thought of nothing more than of a Messias, who as a King should deliver them from their Earthly Enemies. Especially, when Indignities, Reproaches, loss of all Comforts, yea of Life itself fell upon them for what they Attested; and might have been avoided by their Silence, or denying it.

Such Evils might indeed *terrifie Truth*, and render it forsaken; but that they should *encourage a feigned thing*, and *bear up Mens Spirits for the spreading of a Lye*, who is it can imagine? Certainly no Man can with any shew of Reason do it: Who shall yet further consider, that none could possibly be greater encouragers of Speaking Truth than the Apostles were in all their Writings; nor greater Enemies to false Speaking than They. For they forbid it under pain of Eternal Damnation. *Nothing must enter into the New Jerusalem which maketh a Lye: And all who do so must have their part in the Lake that burneth with Fire and Brimstone; which is the Second Death.*

These are some of those many proofs, which confirm the Truth of Scripture Story; and whoever is willing, notwithstanding such Rational Evidence, to disbelieve it, is, I doubt, of such ill Principles and Morals, that it is his interest such History should not

be true. For then there would be no Hell after this Life; which, should there be one, he is conscious to himself, would be very hot to Him.

Theoph. He would deserve it should be so. And none will be forward to pity his Misery, who shall thus shut his Ears upon the message of his Happiness.

But, *Eubulus*, the Prophetick part of Scripture is next to have your Eye.

Eubul. The Prophetick is, in its way, Historical also, different only in this; Historical tells you what hath been; Prophetick tells you what will be: and if it be fulfilled long since, and written, it passeth into a more surprizing sort of History. We are much delighted in the account of former Times; and not less desirous to know what will be in future; And when that which hath been predicted, cometh exactly so to pass, we are the more taken with it, because the Times to come more properly belong unto God; and we look upon it as his immediate Hand, if any thing be thus made know. And hence it is, that whatsoever hath the name of a Prophecie, needeth nothing else to gain attention, and to set itself off amongst the vulgar: who, in this respect, could the less be found fault with, were they not too forward to look upon every idle Prognostication as a Prophecie; till at last they see the things to be false, and themselves to be ridiculous from their Credulity.

But if ordinary, short liv'd Predictions shall be thus attended unto, with what delight may those be entertain'd, which were of greater note; and which God hath ordained as a part of Holy Writ, to be Monuments of his Prescience to all Generations!

I will instance only in those Prophecies which respected our Blessed Saviour so long before his coming

ming; which may wonderfully delight us, in the exceeding exactness of their being fulfilled.

What Heart will not be affected that reads the Prophecie of *Esay c. 9.* so very expresse concerning our Lord? He speaks of Him in it, as if he were already come. To us a Child is Born; to us a Son is given. Highly pertinent to him, *in whom the promises are Yea and Amen*; and through whom God calleth those things that are not as though they were. In which also, there is a strange Propriety of Expression, as to his Nature. To us a Child is Born; as Man, he could be so; to us a Son is given; as he was God, he could only be Given and not Born.

The Time of our Lords Coming so rightly answering to the weeks of *Daniel*, (according to which also the Jews expected the Coming of the *Messias*, about the Time our Redeemer came) may well be our delight; and the more, because the wicked Jews, seeing *Daniel* to stand the Christians in so much stead by his Prophecies, have, since that time, made a new division of their Law into *Prophetas*, and *Hagiographos*; and have excluded Him from the number of Prophets, and given him none of the highest places among the others; whom they made to be of a lower Rank than the Prophets were.

These Prophecies, *Behold a Virgin shall bring forth a Son*; *Esai. 7. 14.* *And the Lord hath created a new thing in the Earth, a Woman shall compass a Man*, *Jer. 31. 22.* How pleasant are they to the Understanding, when we read them fulfilled in our Lords, being conceived of the Holy; and born of a Virgin Mother?

And truly the Prediction *Micah 5. 2.* *Of his being born at Bethleem*, may move us with a more than ordinary delight, when we consider how strangely God's Providence was engaged for the fulfilling it. All that Taxing which was laid upon

the Jewish Nation by *Augustus*; and which required every one to repair to his own City to be Taxed, may appear in a special manner to be order'd by God, for the bringing *Mary* unto *Bethleem*, to be delivered of her Son. It was a great way that *Joseph* and *Mary* were to go; From *Nazareth* in *Galile*, to the City of *David* in *Judea*; And it might seem ill to have hapned unto *Mary*, at a time when her Condition rather required Rest, than was fit for so great a Journey; and this too (as is not improbable) in the depth of Winter. But God somtimes is accomplishing his own Will, and great things for us, when Affairs appear to be cross and unhappy. Yea, and can order the Councils of Princes, at a great distance from them, to carry on these Designs, which *He* in his Providence hath laid; but which never entred *their* Hearts to imagine. And so it is here. We see no means how *Mary* should have been at *Bethleem*, delivered of her Son there, had not the Taxation at that very Time been enjoyn'd. Which may shew that She and *Joseph* had no Thoughts of fulfilling a Prophecy by their journey thither. But hence it was, that the Son of *David* was born in the City of *David*; and Divine Wisdom had ordered, that of this Man it should be said, *He was Born there*.

If we look to those Prophecies which were of our Lord's Suffering and Death, they are such as may give us a great deal of satisfaction in a Crucified Saviour. That of *Esai* is very exprefs, in Chap. 53. *He is despised and rejected of Men; a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief. He hath born our Grievs, and carried our Sorrows. He was wounded for our Transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities.* How exactly is his Picture, as it were, drawn by this Prophet? and how pleased may we be with the Likeness, though it represents him in Grief and Sorrow?

Sorrows? So likewise in *Daniel*, Chap. 9. 26. *After sixty two Weeks shall the Messiah be cut off, but not for himself.* Which things are also a good and just Interpretation of our Lord's Behaviour under his Sufferings. For should he not have suffered *in our stead*, but died only as *our Example*, and as a *Testimony of the Truth of his Doctrine*, (as *Socinus* and his Followers would have it,) some things (I speak it reverently,) would not have born a good Colour; nor at all have been reconcileable to that Perfection which we must own to be in our Lord. I will instance in one, and that is, *his Sweat in the Garden*. Consider this without the thoughts of his dying for our Sins, and say whether it betrays not *too great a fear of Death*; whether there may not seem to have been *greater Instances of undaunted Courage* from some *Heathen Heroes*, and from some who have born the Name of Christians, than from Christ himself. That He should be so much *concern'd at a single Death*, when he knew he died for an Example to others of *not fearing Death upon a good occasion*, what from these Mens Opinions can we think of it?

But then, when we consider that *He was wounded for our Transgressions*; that he struggled with the Wrath of God which was due to all Men, and was never to have end; that *he trod the Wine-press alone*, and *none was with him*; The uncommonness of his Sweat (which was as great drops of Blood,) may shew forth the greatness of the Burthen that was laid upon him; and may make us to wonder at the Power that could at all bear up under such Pressures; but, by no means, to accuse him of Timorousness, because his *Garments are thus died with Blood*. So great and reverend is that Action (or Passion rather,) of our Lord with respect to his Suffering in our stead, which otherwise will require a good Invention to make it appear not mean.

Add to this, that Expression of his, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Had he died only for an Example unto us, and a Confirmation of the Truth of what he declared, why should he thus have cried out? Should we ourselves be called to die for our Holy Religion, I cannot say that we might lawfully thus cry unto God: We ought rather to submit unto his Will, with hopes that he had not forsaken us. Somthing else then must be the cause of these his words; viz. The pouring out of the *full Vials of Gods Wrath* upon Him, as upon one that *bare the Iniquities of us all*. And this will render his words highly apposite unto, and expressive of, his Passion, which otherwise might seem beyond it.

So that though we are to conceive of our Lord's Death as an Example unto us, (*for he is said to suffer for us, leaving us an Example, that we should follow his steps,*) yet as in his Life there are some things above an Example, so in his Death likewise there are, which are placed beyond our Imitation. We may imitate his Meekness and Patience, and Love to Mankind; but the height of his Sufferings for the Sins of the World we cannot. And some Expressions betokening the Greatness of his Passion, whether from his Words or Bloody Sweat, must stand alone, as highly agreeable to the State of his Agony, but not so fit for any besides Himself.

Thus amiable are these Prophecies to the Considerate Reader; not only in so exactly foretelling his Sufferings and Death, and thereby vindicating the Honour of our Religion against the Jews who upbraid us with these his Sufferings and Death; but also in shewing forth a true Beauty in the now-mention'd Deportment of our Saviour, which an horrid Opinion of some, who call themselves Christians, doth tend to make very unbecoming.

Nor may the Prophecies of the manner of his Death be less satisfactory unto us; to wit, *They pierced my Hands and my Feet*, Psal. 22. 17. And Zach. 12. 10. *They shall look upon me whom they have pierced*. For how rightly are these fulfilled in his suffering the Roman Crucifixion! the Jews having no sort of Punishment, in which the Undergoers were thus pierced. And this Death being inflicted by the Roman Power, directs us to the Satisfaction of another Prophecy; viz. *The Scepter shall not depart from Judah till Shiloh come*. But the Power of Life and Death (which is the most proper Signification of Scepter,) being wholly taken from the Jews, and exercised in *Judea* by the Romans, may shew that the *Messias* was come before, according to that Prophecy. And very remarkable it is, that though *Jerusalem*, before our Lord's Birth, was Conquered by *Pompey* the Great, yet throughout the Life of *Hircanus* the High Priest, the Reign of *Herod* the Great, and *Archelaus* his Son, the Jews did Rule by their own Laws; and so, the Scepter was not departed from *Judah*, at the coming of our Lord into the World.

I will mention only one Prophecy more, which from *the unexpected Methods*, and the *quick and various Workings of Providence*, may be very delightful; and that is the Prophecy of *Esaï* concerning his Burial, Chap. 53. *He made his Grave with the Rich in his Death*. But how shall this be? For the Custom of the Romans required that He and the other Two should continue on the Cross, exposed there to the Fowls of the Air to be eaten; or to be consumed leisurely by the Air and Weather. That this Prophecy should be fulfilled, God so orders it, that the Jews, who were the Authors of his Death, should, though they wish'd no good to him, be the Promoters of his Burial. Thus that the Bodies might
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not remain on the Cross upon the Sabbath day, (which was then a great day,) the Jews besought Pilate that they might be taken away; and had their desire granted. But though this were granted them, yet still the Prophecy was in a fair way not to be fulfilled. For among the Jews there was a place on purpose to bury Malefactors in: And so our Lord must have been buried with the Thieves; and then how could he be said to make his Grave with the Rich in his Death?

That therefore this might be effected, *Joseph of Arimathea, a Rich Man, and honourable Counsellor, comes and begs Christ's Body of Pilate. Pilate, possibly having a regard to him as he was a Wealthy Man, and in good esteem; and not well knowing how to deny the Body of Jesus to Burial, whom he had declared to be free from fault, though he had afterwards condemned him; order'd the Body to be given to Joseph. Who, after it was wound up in fine Linnen and Spices, laid it in a New Sepulchre, which he, in his Garden, had hewn out of a Rock, for his own Tomb. And so, contrary to the use of the Romans, he was Buried; and contrary to the use of the Jews, he was Buried not with Malefactors, but in a Creditable Sepulchre with the Rich. In such an Eminent and surprising Manner will God bring about his own Counsels; and hath accomplished this Prophecy.*

There are also many other Prophecies directly shewing forth the Resurrection, Ascension, and other things relating to our Lord; in which a Religious and Contemplative Soul may find a Rich and Glorious Repast. But these I at present will omit; and will only take notice of what I hinted before, *viz.* That some other parts of Holy Writ, in themselves very delightful, do yet afford us a further Delight, and are in a sort Prophetical, by including the Image of greater things to come. Such were the

Israelites

Israelites coming out of Egypt, which signified our Lords Coming out from thence. *The Rock* in the Wilderness pouring out Water; which Rock was Christ. *Jonas's* being three Days and three Nights in the Whales Belly, and afterwards thrown up; which imported our Lords being so long in the Grave, and then Rising. *Isaac's* Living, after *Abraham* had in intention Sacrificed him; which betokened our Lords Resurrection. *Agar and Sarah*, which were an Allegory of the Two Covenants. *Canaan, Jerusalem*, and *Mount Sion*, which were Types of a Country, City, and Church above. And many more such as These; which, what a true and suitable pleasure do they give to one whose Heart is fixed on Sacred things?

Theoph. While we look from hence, *backwards*, it may indeed hugely delight us to see the *Shadows* of our *future Happiness*. While from thence we look *forwards*, it may take us wholly up in Love and Joy to behold those Shadows reduced into *Realities*; which for the Excellence in themselves, and the infinite advantage they give unto us, have been altogether worthy of such Presignifications.

And truly, *Eubulus*, of quite another Strain were those speeches which the Heathen Oracles, gave when they were consulted about things to come. The Ambiguous Signification of their Words denoted *Sophistry* and *Cunning* rather than *Prescience*. And hence, it is no wonder that they were not forward of themselves to Prophecie, since when sought unto for knowledge of future Events, they were thus put to their Shifts. For the Devil can *but guess* what will be, by comparing present affairs with what are past. And though *his* guesses may more encline to certainty than the guesses of *Men*, (for we may suppose him to have a far greater insight into former years, and the successes of things in them, than any Man can have,)

have,) yet, for his Reputation Sake with his Votaries, he durst not speak things positively, but always in a dubious Sense; that if they fell out otherwise than was at first thought, another Latent meaning might rather make Men blame their own *Dimightedness* towards the *Oracle*, than the *Oracle's* towards the *futurities* enquired after.

There are, I must confess, very perspicuous and important Prophecies in the Books of the Sybils. And I will not say, but God in his Goodness might inspire those *Women* for the giving out some Oracles, which, as rightly futing with the Revelations of the Gospel, might afterwards the more sway with the Nations. But many of these Prophecies were, by the Pious Fraud of some Persons, not Written till after things were come to pass: With a design, no doubt, to bring a greater honour to what in appearance was so plainly foretold. Thus the Oracles which were ascribed to the *Cumean Sibyl*, were, in great measure, written by the Jews, before our Saviour came into the World. Those which are Extant under the Name of the *Erythrean Sibyl*, are, for the most part spurious, as being Written by some that lived more than an Hundred Years after our Lord. But instead of greater, there is less credit (as in such dealing it usually falls out,) both to the Jewish and Christian affairs mention'd by them. *Varro*, so far as there are Acrosticks in them, denies their Truth. *Cicero*, for the same reason, contends that they were rather from Human Study, than Divine Inspiration. And *Celsus* will have many things to be foisted in by the Christians: So that the Reputation of the whole is hereby much diminished. And, indeed, it is, with a rational Man, a very great argument against them, that many Oracles there are so particular, and direct, that the Holy Scriptures themselves are, in some things, less particular
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and direct. And who can think that God would more plainly reveal himself to *uncouth Women* among the Nations, than to *Holy Men* among his own People; to whom as a Pledge of his Favour, above all others, the Sacred Oracles (as the Apostle speaketh,) were committed?

Eubul. You do the Prophecies of the Holy Scripture no more than right, while you prefer them above all others. There is no Deceit in them. The Time in which they were written is well known: And was long before the things Prophefied came to pass. The Jews, who were the greatest Enemies to our Lord, cannot deny the Truth of them. And some of these Enemies, from the expressness of those Prophecies which respect our Saviours sufferings, have been forced to say, that there is to be a *Suffering Messias*, as well as a *Glorious one*; though they will not allow the True Messias, who is both the One and the Other, to be either.

Theoph. I could desire to be continually fixed on the thoughts of the Prophetick part of Scripture; so divinely pleasant is it from the lively Representation of great and sacred things in after-times revealed. I doubt not, but there will be a true Beauty in that other part of holy Scripture, which you termed the *ADHORTATIVE*.

Eubul. If great Love, intermingled with great Art in the enforcing of it, can give a Beauty, (and what can give a greater Beauty than these?) it is truly amiable.

And, indeed, God, who *knoweth our Frame and Make*, and can tell what Words will most Sway the Affections of Men, hath seemed to let go none that may prevail with them to be such as they ought to be. Sometimes enforcing his Exhortations, from the Greatness of his Favours; the Excellences of his Laws; the Natural Desires and Aversations of Men; their Forgetfulness; and such like. I

I almost wonder how any of the Jews of Old, could be Disobedient, when they read such Words as these. *Ask now of the Days that are past, since the Day that God Created Man upon the Earth; and ask from the One side of Heaven unto the Other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is; or hath been heard like it. Did ever People hear the Voice of God speaking out of the midst of the Fire, as Thou hast heard, and Live? Or hath God assayed to go, and take him a Nation from the midst of another Nation, by Signs and Wonders, and a Mighty Hand? Thou shalt therefore keep his Statutes. He led thee through the great and terrible Wilderness, where there was no Water; and he brought thee forth Water out of the Rock of Flint. He fed thee there with Manna, which thy Fathers knew not; Thy Raiment waxed not Old upon thee; neither did thy Foot swell these Forty years; Therefore shalt thou keep the Commandments of the Lord thy God.* And where an Exhortation is set home by the recounting of such mighty Favours, it cannot, sure but prevail.

There is nothing usually will take more with a Man, than the Reputation of being *Wise and Understanding*: The Excellency of Man consisting in nothing more, than in a Power of Discerning and Acting what is good. On this ground therefore it is that God builds his Exhortation: *Keep, saith he, and do these Statutes and Judgments, for this is your Wisdom and Understanding in the sight of the Nations, Deut. . . 6.* And, since a Man will bear any thing better than the Name of Fool, and accounteth it a great Discredit to act weakly and below a Man; Therefore God so often in Scripture termeth Disobedience Folly; and speaketh thus to Transgressors; *O ye Fools, when will you learn Wisdom? How long ye simple Ones will ye love Simplicity, and Fools hate Knowledge? Turn you at my Reproof.*

I look upon Peace and Plenty to be, as it were, a visible Exhortation, and a Persuasive that is palpable, and may be felt: But because these do sometimes steal away the Heart, and are apt to render the Man forgetful of his Gracious Benefactor, God, in infinite Goodness, is pleased to strengthen this Exhortation, by Cautioning us, *when we have eaten and are full, not to forget Him; to take heed to ourselves; and to keep our Souls diligently, lest we forget the things which our Eyes have seen; and lest we depart from the Lord our God, all the days of our Life.*

But should any be so heedless or perverse as not to be prevail'd upon by such Exhortations as these, how can they hold out against God's pathological Pleading with them? Thus Ezek. 18. *Ye say, The Way of the Lord is not equal: O House of Israel, is not my Way equal? are not your Ways unequal? If ye offer the Lame and the Sick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto thy Governour, will He be pleased with thee, or accept thy Person? saith the Lord of Hosts. A Son honoureth his Father, and a Servant his Master: If I then be a Father, where is mine Honour? If a Master, where is my Fear? Malac. 1. I will plead with you, saith the Lord, and with your Childrens Children will I plead: For pass over the Isles of Chittim and see, and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be any such thing. Hath a Nation changed their Gods, which yet are no Gods? But my People have changed their Glory for that which profiteth not. Be astonished, O ye Heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord of Hosts. For my People have committed two Evils; They have forsaken me, the Fountain of Living Waters; and hewed them out Cisterns, broken Cisterns, that can hold no Water, Jer. 2.*

Theoph. These are highly moving. And, in my Opinion, no less is that of quickning Mens Obedi-
R ence,

ence, even by the *better Carriage of Beasts and Fowls*. *I have nourished and brought up Children, and they have rebelled against me. The Ox knoweth his Owner, and the Ass his Masters Crib: But Israel doth not know; my People doth not consider, Isai. 1. I hearkned and heard, but thy spake not aright; no Man repented him of his Wickedness, saying, What have I done? Yea, the Stork in the Heavens knoweth her appointed times, and the Turtle, and the Crane, and the Swallow observe the time of their coming; but my People know not the Judgment of the Lord, Jer. 8. He will be yet much lower than the Beasts and Fowls, who seeing himself out-gone by them, will not be ashamed and quicken his pace.*

Eubul. There are innumerable other Schemes of Speech, which God Almighty useth; as if he would not omit so much as one Figure or Topick of sacred Oratory, by which the wicked Hearts of Men might be bent to their good. And truly all the gracious Methods, which under the Legal Dispensation he hath chosen for Persuasives, are in force now under the Gospel, for the engaging us to Obedience; it being through the Blood of Christ that so much Care and Love was then shewed. Only what were made *Excitements* to the *Jews*, are now, with the change of some Circumstances, enlarged, and do belong to the *whole World*.

As for those Exhortations which are more strictly comprized in the Gospel; what may we say of them? or rather what may we not? The *New Covenant* is so wholly in itself a Persuasive, set off with the highest Expressions of Divine Wisdom and Love; that where *IT* alone will not prevail, all other Arguments may seem fruitless. But that there may nothing be wanting which may work upon the Soul of Man, what affectionate Beseechings are there added! What earnest Invitations given!
How

How are pure Minds stirred up by way of Remembrance ! What fervent Prayers are made for Mens Constancy and Perseverance ! What Christian Sorrow expressed at the Defection of any ! What tender-heartedness shewed towards those, who, after a Fall, are repentant ! And in them all, what Attractives are there for our Love !

I have somtimes thought, that should a Person, to whom the True God is unknown, read, or hear, the earnest Exhortations, the many taking Suggestions, which in Holy Scripture are used for the engaging Men to Obedience, he would judge, that, surely, God is much advantaged thereby ; or otherwise he would not be so very desirous of it. This I am sure we may with Truth say ; that were it possible our Obedience could add to the Blessedness of the Almighty, he could not use more winning Speeches for the obtaining of it than now he doth. But therefore because we can no way profit Him by the Observance of his Laws, and because it is our own very great advantage if we do observe them ; how sweetly prevalent may so many persuasives seem unto us ! And how with an holy Gratitude may we say ; *Lord, what is Man that thou hast such regard unto him ! That thou givest him Line upon Line, Exhortation upon Exhortation ; and continuest an uncessant care over him for the securing him unto Happiness !*

Theoph. It is fit indeed that such Exhortations should be followed with Devotions : *Praises* unto God, who is so Gracious unto Men ; and *Prayers* that we may never suffer such persuasives to be fruitless upon us. And it may fairly lead you, *Eubulus*, to the *Devotional Part* of Holy Scripture ; in the last place to be spoken unto.

Eubul. This we shall find to be truly excellent also : For it consisted of such Services, as (in their intent,) were fit for Men to pay unto their God. None of

their Holy Feasts was there, but was in Memory of some Signal Favour. And, as it was *their* pleasure to rejoyce thus before their Lord, and Holy Benefactor, so it may likewise be *our* pleasure to read of their Religious doing it. Had the Creation of the World been understood by the Heathens, *Juvenal* would not have derided the Jews as such, *Quæis Septima quæque fuit Lux Ignava; & vitæ partem non attingit ullam: Who lost the Seventh part of their Time; and improved it to no End of Life.* And if *Plutarch* had known the design of their carrying *Boughs of Trees* in their Feast of Tabernacles, he would not in a Scoffing Manner have called it the Jewish *Θυσιοποιαν*, by an Odious comparing it with that intemperate Feast of *Bacchus*; in which the *Bacchides* ran about with Javelins wrapped round with Ivy, termed *Θυσιοί*. Their Sacrifices were Visible Prayers or Praises, or Expiations; in all of them the End was truly Excellent; and no one of them had such Rites as required Secresie, for a Shelter from an honest and Chast Eye. And hence possibly it was, that God forbid Groves to be near his Altar; as having, by their Shades and Recesses, given occasion to those Uncleannesses which too frequently attended the Worship of the Heathens. Neither ever did or durst any, *tacita libare acerra; & in aperto vivere voto; ask those things which it were a shame Men should hear.* But the Scope of their Petitions was Gods Blessing in the way of Righteousness.

And as in these things their Religious Services were quite of a different Colour from those of the Nations; and in every thing might have worn this Impress, *Holiness to the Lord*, so it is very remarkable, what Humility and Submission of Spirit, attended their Devotions when God laid Afflictions upon them. *It is the Lord, let him do what pleaseth him; saith Eli. I was Dumb, I opened not my Mouth, because*

because Thou didst it ; faith David. Though he kill yet will I put my Trust in Him, faith Job. Herein, likewise, very different from the Heathen ; who in their Sufferings were forward to *accuse* their Gods ; venting their Grievs in *undecent Invektives* against them.

But when we read of those sacred Heights of Devotion which some of their Holy Men rose unto, how must we be affected ! how divided betwixt Love and Delight ! Our Souls are *embruted*, if we be not almost transformed into the same Seraphick Temper with them ; who (to use the words of one of them) *have thought One day in Gods Courts better than a Thousand : Desiring nothing in Heaven but God ; nor any thing on Earth in Comparison of Him.*

And such Devotion how yet further is it improved by our Blessed Lord, who hath *continued all Night therein* ; who hath Consecrated himself by Prayer a Sacrifice for the whole World ; and hath offered up, upon his Cross, *Supplications with strong Cries and Tears, both for Himself and Us !* Who is it can avoid the being wholly posselt with Love, who contemplateth our Saviour at the Right Hand of God, in a *mighty way* Mediating for us ? Though at a distance from us, yet *openly* on our behalf, urging his Merits, Passion and Death, and presenting our Prayers unto his Father ! Which, that they may be the more acceptable, he himself, while on Earth, hath given us a most perfect Prayer, as a *Pattern* for our Imitation, and a Form for our Use ; suitable to the greatest Ardour of Piety that Mortality is capable of : Hath sent likewise from Heaven the *Holy Spirit to make Intercessions for us, with Groans that cannot be uttered* ; joyning with us from *within*, and giving our Prayers such a Fervour and Powerfulness as is not to be equall'd by Words. Devotion raised to such Perfection, as the having our Blessed Lord,

and the Holy Spirit so nearly concerned in it, is so highly amiable, that it requires only the being truly known, for the being sincerely loved.

You have, *Theophilus*, in short measures, an account of the Divine Law, as the word *Law* may be taken in the *wider sense*.

Theoph. How acceptable the account you have given me is, I cannot more truly say, than by telling you I could have very willingly heard it much longer. Yea, so delightful are these other parts of Holy Writ, that they afford a great pleasure even to some, who are less Observers of the *Preceptive Part* than they ought to be. I have known who have been very well versed in the Bible, and could rehearse, if need were, the chief things contain'd therein, when yet their Practice hath been as lame as if they knew not a Letter there.

Eubul. These Persons quite mistake what they read, while they find a Pleasure therein, without a respect to the Divine Law properly as such. All the other parts of Scripture are, (as before was said,) some way or other, in order to the Preceptive Part; and if there be who understand them otherwise, they go contrary to the Mind and Will of their Author.

But yet, how can any one enjoy a Pleasure from that History, which God hath caused to be written as an *Encouragement* to Obedience, and not be *encouraged* at the same time to be *Obedient* himself? Or how acknowledge the *Divine Justice* in the Punishment of Disobedience, and not be prompted to *fear* Him, who is Righteous in his Judgments, and will not spare the Wicked? If God be *True* in his *Predictions*, who will not think him so in his *Threatnings*? And shall so many *Prophecies* concerning Him who came to destroy the Works of the Devil, give any delight to him who is resolved to retain those Works?

Works? It would be a strange Contradiction, that any one should be pleased with the *Winning Exhortations* which God useth to engage Men unto the Observance of his Laws, and yet, in the mean while, be unconcerned whether he observe those Laws or not. And how can the *Devotion* of the Saints of old touch his Soul with any delight, who is, and is resolved to continue, a Stranger unto what he readeth them to have been remarkable for; and who neglecteth that Obedience, without which their Prayers and Praises would not have been acceptable with God? Whosoever they be, that, with no Conformity to the Divine Law, are yet pleased with, and do pretend to love, the holy Writings, they shall be rewardable in the sight of God no more than one that loveth the Writings of *Cæsar*, or *Livy*. It is not from a Principle of Goodness that these Authors are delighted in; but they please the Fancy, and yield something that hits the Readers Humour. Just so is it with this Divine Book in respect of these Men. They like it not for the great Design it hath; but they find something, from its great variety, that delights the imaginative Faculty: Or their Knowledge therein is in Quest of Opinion and Reputation among Men: Which, how much below the Dignity of this sacred Volume is it! Opinion and Reputation, even in Obedience, will stand a Man in little stead hereafter; much less will they, when they are without Obedience.

Theoph. We will let *These* Men go, and make no Inquiries concerning them. But what, *Eubulus*, shall we think of *Those* who are *Conscienciously Obedient* to the Divine Law, yet find not that *Delight therefrom*, which *Earthly Things* do frequently give them; and who *hereupon* are very apt to interpret their love to the Divine Precepts to be *unsincere*, and such as will be *rejected*?

Eubul. The Divine Laws are indeed worthy the highest pitch of our Affections; and they are happy Men who find a more quick and grateful Relish from them, than from all Earthly Objects. Yet I cannot say, but there may be a true love of them, when it is otherwise.

For our Passions have a very great dependence upon the outward Senses: And these Senses admitting of strong impressions from Material things, and from them alone, no wonder that the Soul is visibly affected; and this sometimes the more, from the unexpectedness, and pleasing surprize with which these External Objects present themselves; insomuch that it requires Labour and Pains to keep our Affections within due Bounds.

But the Case is different with the Divine Laws; they, being of a Spiritual Nature; and in many things above the outward Sense, do not make those impressions thereupon, which Visible Objects do. So that here, if the Affections be stirr'd, they must be so, not immediately from the *Things*, but from the *Souls own Reasoning*, and deliberate Thoughts, inculcating these Laws, and the great advantages which they give. Add to this, that *things future* (for such the Reward of these Laws are,) do not give so *quick a Sense*, as those that are *present*. And because the Soul is at *some pains* in thinking; and the things thought of are of *old standing* to our knowledge, (as the Practicks of Religion usually are,) there is not that pleasure from *surprize*, as in those things that fall out *unthought of*, or are *new* unto us.

A Person that is truly Obedient to these Laws, and resolves to continue so, need not despond, as if his Love to them were unsincere, though he finds not his Affections raised to such a pleasurable Sense, as he conceiveth sometimes from Worldly things.

God

God will not require that things should act upon the Soul, otherwise than is their Nature to do : And if his Laws obtain their End, by producing Righteousness of Life, there is a better Evidence of Love to them, than from inward delight alone there would be. Yea, possibly, if the Man will cease disquieting himself, and will calmly search his own Heart, he will discern that the Sacred Laws are very much approved of there ; and esteemed far beyond those Earthly Objects which so highly delighted him. He sees that the Affections which these outward things did so much heat and raise, do, after a little while, cool and sink again. But the Divine Law finds a continued respect within him. And though the Love thereof do not enkindle a flame in Him, yet it ceaseth not to have Warmth in itself. He sees that his Affections are not always in his own power to raise them as he pleaseth : He will therefore endeavour that his Reason shall supply their Defects : And that the Sacred Precepts shall never want This to attend them, if he cannot yield them the Other.

But suppose that there be a great Coldness towards these Laws, and an inward indisposition to Obedience ; yet if notwithstanding he will resolutely Obey ; and, what he cannot do with that pleasure which some others have, will do through pains and striving, he will not be disapproved by his Lord. An ill Temper of Soul or Body is one of those Enemies against which he is to Exercise a Spiritual Valour. And if he shall Fight and Conquer, (and Conquer he doth if his Obedience be still on the upper hand,) he shall undoubtedly have a Crown. And, for ought I know, it will be as weighty an One, as his, who obeyeth these Laws with less Difficulty. This Man, indeed, is much happier in the way, but the other shall be altogether as happy in the End.

Theoph. What you have said I believe would be much for the quiet of the Persons we spake of: Who, by more suspecting their Obedience for its seeming Coldness, than approving it for its real steadfastness, do want such Lenitives.

Eubul. I should be glad, could I Administer Comfort to any who are truly Religious. Though, to say Truth, *Theophilus*, many are too apt to make an ill use of what is spoken after this manner: And do improve it, not so much to a right appeasing of their sadder thoughts, as to the reconciling themselves to a careless or hardened Temper of Soul. I would therefore urge what would certainly be for the good of all; *viz. SUCH A FREQUENCY AND FIX-EDNESS OF THOUGHTS* upon the Divine Laws, as the Royal Psalmist expresseth; who immediately after he had said, *O how I Love thy Law*, addeth, *It is my Meditation all the Day*. By which we may conceive that the Sacred Variety, and the Wondrous things of Holy Writ, did find that Constancy of Entertainment in his Heart which was worthy of them.

And where, *Theophilus*, is there such satisfaction to be met with, as the Sacred Scriptures reach out unto us! And how little may other things, and how wholly may These, engage our Thoughts! The being Happy, you know, is that which every one looketh after. To this all Mens Aims and Endeavours are bent; though in Paths much different one from another; and, for the most part, at the greatest distance from what is sought. And well may they be so, since none of them reach beyond the Grave.

Not to mention those things which are of a grosser Nature, relating to the Body; and which Men vigourously contend for, rising early and sitting up late; view let us, *Theophilus*, those things which the
more

more *thinking sort* of Men do persue. Books and Learning I would not be thought to plead against; you know I very much esteem and honour them. But what is it generally, that Men employ their Thoughts and Studies about? Are they not better skill'd in one anothers Ignorance and Errors than in the knowledge and Truth of things? And those Truths which with great pains and long searches they find out, how mean are they if throughly consider'd? They satisfie not the Man when he comes to Dye; who would have something else than some Truth in History, or some Demonstration in Mathematicks, or some Rules of Policy to cheer him; for they will stand him in no stead then. Nay, even those parts of Philosophy, which tend chiefly to the beating down the *Fears of Death*, how cold and insipid are they? The best that any of the Heathen Moralists have spoken amounts only to this, That the Souls surviving the Body was, at the most, but an Opinion; and a thing which some of them rather wish'd *should* be, than were sure that *it was*. *Equidem saepe emori, si fieri posset, vellem, ut ea quae dicam liceret invenire. Utrum autem sit melius vivere an mori Dii immortales sciunt, Hominum quidem scire arbitror neminem*, saith Socrates, (in Cic.) one of the strongest Pleaders for the Souls Immortality. "I would, "were it possible for me, often die, if so I might "at last find the things I speak of: But whether it "be better to live or die, God alone knoweth; I "suppose no Man living can tell. Small Satisfaction doth this give to a Man, who, to his earnest desires of having his Being continued, hath, at the highest, such mean grounds for his hope.

Nor doth he find himself any more at ease from its being said, *That the Man who is dead, in his having ceased to be, is altogether devoid of Misery*. For if he perceiveth no Misery, he is altogether as far from per-

perceiving any thing of Pleasure. And surely the falling from a place amongst Men, into a Condition no better than that of a Stone, or any other senseless thing, may encline him, who considers it, unto pensiveness and sorrow.

And doth it make any jot more for his content to be told, *That he shall go the same way that all Men before him have gone, and that all after him shall go?* Certainly it doth not. For may it not rather encrease his Complaints, in that not only all Men thus die, but are ~~also~~ denied that length of Life which is granted to ~~many~~ other Creatures inferiour unto Men? Fain would he when he comes to lie on his Death-Bed, not wholly perish. Earnestly he desires that his Soul may yet further live, and find elsewhere that Happiness which in this World he sought in vain. And, might it be, he would wish that his Body, which he hath taken so much care of, and which hath been instrumental to those Actions that, commended both to God and Men, should not have an utter end in the Grave.

Now all these things are by our Lawgiver affixed as Rewards to the Obedience of his Laws: Rewards, though vastly great, yet not greater than the Excellences of those Laws are, which, and only which, through God's Mercy, can make the Man fit for so boundless an Happiness.

And when *Life and Immortality are brought to Light*, and are, as wish'd for by Men, so, thoroughly made known unto them; in so much that they have not the Liberty now of *thinking either way*, but are in Duty to believe these things so to be, as being establish'd by such Arguments, than which in Modesty and Reason greater cannot be desired, how should they with earnestness be thought of? And how the Laws, betwixt which and them there is so close a Connexion, be, with a more than ordinary intent-
ness,

ness, contemplated? Surely it is but meet it thus should be, since a Mans chief Welfare deserves his settled and constant Thoughts; and since, through the infinite Mercy of our Lord to us in the Observance of those his Laws, the least and most inconsiderable part of our Being, and Happiness, is in this World; and that which shall be in the next, is, in Comparison of it, no less than a whole Ocean to a single Drop.

And such Meditation, *Theophilus*, we the rather may exercise, not only because, if we did not know these things to be true, nothing could be more desired by us than that they should be true; but also because, being, even while Children, instructed in them, and never remembring the time that we were altogether ignorant of them, we are apt thereupon to be the less affected with their Greatness and Excellence. It is pity that the sense of these mighty Favours should lose any thing of its quickness, by our long acquaintance with them; which ought rather to heighten our esteem of, and thankfulness for, them. A very great Imperfection in our Nature this is, but may in good measure be cured; and no better Method can we use for the doing it, than frequent and devout Contemplations, which will bring us to ourselves, and give us a lively relish of the things which belong to our Everlasting Peace.

Theoph. They doubtless will be of very great avail. And possibly this Consideration may be some persuasive for the daily use of them; viz. That *Thinking or Meditating* is so proper to the Nature of Man, that no Creature upon Earth may seem to have any share in it besides himself. Some indeed have been forward enough to grant that other Creatures have something of Reason in them, and a Power of Thinking, such an one as it is. But then to difference them from Men, and to set them in a lower Rank, they have allow'd

allow'd to none but Men such a Rational Nature as is capable of Religion; and such a Faculty of Thinking as can conceive what Righteousness, Goodness, and the higher sort of Truths are. And therefore, since Men alone, of all Earthly Beings, are endued with this Faculty, we cannot but think that it is to be laid out, and not lost by neglect.

Eubul. And who is it that would leave a Power unexercised, in which Mans proper Excellence is so much seen; and which affords him a pleasure befitting a Reasonable Soul? In This, when it is employ'd in Sacred things, he finds a sweet retreat from the Cares and Toils of Life; from the Enmities and Falseness of the World. And whatsoever Discomposure his Mind hath suffered by them, he hereby rectifies, and sets all strait again. He can, in This, behold, as at a distance, the Irregularities of others; and solace himself that he is out of the reach of bad Example. And though a true reflecting on the Covetousness, Pride, Ambition, and such like Evils, which prevail so much abroad; and on the Troubles, which they betray those unto whose Vices they are, and sometimes those whose Vices they are not, doth raise some concernedness and grief within him; yet he perceives a satisfaction not altogether unlike unto his, who seeing others toss'd on troubled Waves is himself safe at Land: Or who, discerning whole Armies engaged in Fight, is secure himself from the Danger. And not only so, but, by such Meditation, he dresses and adorns his Soul for an Holy Converse with God; and secretly enjoys the Communion of Blessed Spirits in things so refined and Heavenly, that no Earthly pleasure is to be compared with them.

Theoph. I wish this seemed not to have been the Pleasure and Privilege of the Ages past, chiefly; and, for the most part, little to appertain unto

us;

Us; who have so far degenerated from the Saints of Old, that we find much tediousness in that which they placed their greatest delight, and spent most of their time, in. When some of Them have laid down their Lives amidst Torments for their Religion, we think much to spend some serious Thoughts about the things which relate to our Eternal Welfare; yea, we look upon it as a Task and Trouble to meditate even upon the infinite Love of God to us; and can hardly do it, though but for a few Minutes, without Weariness and Distraction.

Eubul. Our Lawgiver may justly take it ill from us, that, when we can with earnestness fix our Thoughts, the greatest part of our Lives, upon poor Earthly Things, *which perish in the using*, we should be backward to Contemplate his Laws, which alone bring a durable Peace unto us, and would requite us abundantly, if even all our time should be employ'd in them.

Theoph. Happy it would be, if Men could be prevail'd upon to Love their own Happiness, and to place their Thoughts thereon. A thing this is, which, one would think, should not need many persuasions to move them to do it. But they mistake Trifles for Happiness; and *leave the Fountain of Waters to trust in broken Cisterns.*

Eubul. To such Men as These are, I would urge only *this one thing*. Let them betake themselves to *frequent and serious Considerations*; and if upon *due search* into the Holy Scriptures, and an humble and constant *repairing unto God by Prayer*, that he would open their Eyes for the discerning the wondrous things of his Law, they shall repent of their Pains, as being either lost or not well requited; let them then forsake the Divine Laws, and seek elsewhere for Peace and Rest.

But

But if, after such Search, and such Prayers, any should forsake these Laws, might not our Lord say unto them as Pharaoh said unto Hadad, 1 Kings 11. 22. *What hast thou lacked with me, that thou seekest to return into thine own Country? What is it that you have wanted with me? Could greater Love be shew'd you? More Holy and Righteous Laws be given you? Or more desireable Rewards be held forth unto you? That you should leave me, and return to the World, where you will find nothing but Dissatisfaction?*

We may with Truth say unto Men, That there are the greatest Excellences in the Laws of our Lord; and an Happiness yeilded by them, which no where else can be found. But whoever shall with Reverence and Singleness of Heart look into them, may say of them as the Queen of Sheba said of Solomon, 1 Kings 10. 6. 7. 8. *It was a true Report that we heard of the great Wisdom and Goodness that were in these Laws. We believed not until we came, and our Eyes had seen it; and behold the half was not told us. The Wisdom and the Excellency of them exceedeth the Fame which we heard. Happy, O Lord, are thy Children; Happy are thy Servants that stand continually before thee, and hear thy Wisdom.*

And thus, *Theophilus*, according to your desire, we have closed the Seventh Evening.

Theoph. I wish that all my Days might be spent as much to my advantage, as these Seven have been.

Eubul. I doubt not but they will, to so much the more, by how much Practice is better than Discourse.

DISCOURSE the Eighth, Concerning the Deformity of Disobedience to the Divine Laws.

Quis est tam dissimilis homini, qui non moveatur
offensione Turpitudinis? Cic. de Fin. l. 5.

The Contents.

Disobedience is a Pollution. It brings Disorder into a Man. It tends to make the Almighty to minister to his Creatures in the vilest Offices. How God cannot be made to serve, How he may. He is pleas'd in Holy Writ to speak after the manner of Men, that so He may condescend to our Understandings, and excite our Affections. How He is made to serve in His Holy Name. How in His Works. The Creation sensible of this Slavery, and God very much displeas'd with it. Disobedience of an Extensive Nature. It affects a kind of Eternity. It's highly Disingenuous. God necessitates none to Disobedience. Why He will not force Men into Obedience. Why he generally cuts them not off.

T H E O P H I L U S.

I Had thought, *Eubulus*, when last I bid you Good-Night, to have left to your choice the Matter of this Evenings Talk. But, reflecting on the Excellency of the Divine Laws, and the great Happiness that Men have in them, my Thoughts at length run on to the Consideration of Disobedience thereunto. Sure, said I, if these Holy Laws are in themselves so *amiable*, and do make him who observeth them, to be, with the King's Daughter, *all Glorious within*; the *disobeying* of them is, in itself, *Odious*, and renders the Man inwardly *very Deform'd*. I pray you therefore, *Eubulus*, let this *Ungrateful Thing* be the Subject of one Discourse. It may not be devoid of Profit to us, since the *Foulness* of *This*, if thoroughly discerned, will, possibly, no less, one way, *secure* our Obedience, than the *Beauty* of the Divine Precepts will, another way, *allure* it.

E U B U L U S.

I Ndeed, *Theophilus*, *Sin*, *Iniquity*, or *Wickedness*, (or whatever Name besides evil Actions have,) all of which are nothing else but *Disobedience*, or *Transgression* of the Law,) are Character'd in Holy Scriptures by *Pollution* and *Filthiness*. And as a Signification of such *Defilement*, were those *Numerous Washings* under the Old Law. And those *Sacrifices*, which had the Sins of the People confessed over them, were, by reason of those Sins, so *polluted*, that they were *commanded to be burnt out of the Camp*; and they who burnt them there, were by them in such manner *defiled*, that they could not return into the Camp till they had wash'd their Cloaths, and bat'h'd their
Flesh

Flesh in Water, Levit. 16. 28. And answerable hereunto did the Prophets afterwards speak; *Wash me thoroughly from mine Iniquity, and cleanse me from my Sin*, Psal. 51. 2. *They were defiled with their own Works*, Psal. 106. 39. *Though thou wash thee with Nitre, and take thee much Soap, yet thy Iniquity is mark'd before me; how canst thou say, I am clean* & Jer. 2. 23. And upon the account of the Filthiness of Sin, God is said to be of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity, Hab. 2. 13.

Neither doth the New Testament speak otherwise of Disobedience. Out of the Heart proceed evil Thoughts, Murders, Adulteries, Fornications, Thefts, False-witnessings; Blasphemies; these are the Things which **DEFILE** the Man, Matth. 15. 19. And hence the Blood of Christ is said to cleanse us from all Sin: And Baptism is not only a Rite that doth initiate us into Christianity, but is termed the *Washing of Regeneration*, as purifying us from the Pollutions of our Natures. And truly so odious and foul is Sin, that when St. Paul would set it off most in its own Deformity, he could find no worse word for it than itself; for he calls it *sinful Sin*, Rom. 7. 13. The whole Nature of it being nothing else but Pollution.

Disobedient Persons may, indeed, in outward shape, appear to us Comely and Beautiful: And their Discourse and Deportment may, in some things, be taking enough. But could we thoroughly discern a Soul Deform'd, as to all its Faculties; could we rightly see the Loathsomeness of that Body, whose every Member hath been made the Member of *Unrighteousness*, and wholly infected with the Poyson of Sin, all the World could not afford so bad a sight, as this.

Theoph. Nay, *Enbulus*, such a stain do vile Practices cast upon a Man, that though perchance we never may have seen his Face, or he himself may

have lived many Ages since, we yet shall have *object* thoughts of him, and a great *Disrespect* to his Memory. And if he be of our own Age and Neighbourhood, that our Eyes have sometimes a sight of him, how do his *Ill Morals infect* even his *outward Shape*? That whether we will or no, we cannot but have some secret aversion from his Person, though by reason of his Degree, or Place, we dare not always shew it.

Eubul. It is even so as you say, *Theophilus*. But as Disobedience to the Divine Law throws a Pollution upon every Faculty of the Soul, and Member of the Body; so it also gives a further Deformity, by bringing a *Disorder* into the Man; and causing that which should be superiour, and have chief command in him, to be brought under, and made to serve; His sensitive Appetite getting above his Rational, and his Body bearing sway over his Soul. Neither when such Disorder is at home, and in his own Breast, is it like to stay there alone; but, in all probability, it will spread itself *abroad*, and in the Community: For the *Discomposures*, which are there, arise first from *private Irregularities*.

But not only doth Disobedience to the Divine Law overturn all order in the *Man himself*, and breed Confusion in *Kingdoms*; but (what is abundantly worse,) it induceth a yet *higher Disorder* into the World; *Subjecting, as it were, the Great God of Heaven and Earth, and making him to Minister unto his Creatures in the vilest Offices*. They are his own Words to his Disobedient People of Israel, *Isai. 43. 24. Thou hast made Me TO SERVE with thy Sins*; And what greater Deformity can there be (thought of, than such Disorder as this, that shall reach, not only so wide as the *Earth*, but even unto *Heaven*? And who would not hate Disobedience, which is the Cause and Source of it?

Theoph.

Theoph. I can easily grant, that, from Disobedience to the Divine Laws, there ariseth such *Deformed Disorder*, as you speak of, in *Private Men*, and in *Communities* also on Earth.

But how can it extend itself unto *Heaven*, for the bringing of God under? It is his Name, *I am that I am*; which denotes the Immutability of his Being, and such a Perfection, as cannot any way be diminished. As he is Omnipotent, He cannot be *overpower'd* by any; as He is the All-wise God, there is none can *Circumvent* him. As he is perfectly One in his Essence, without any the least mixture, He can no way be *subject to any Alteration*. And as He is Eternal, He not only can never *cease to Be*; but also, he cannot ever be *less than infinitely perfect, and infinitely Blessed*: Which is altogether inconsistent with *serving*; for that supposeth Weakness, and Deficiency.

Therefore, *Eubulus*, since I see you intend it as the chiefest Brand on Disobedience, that it maketh the Almighty to be Inferiour, and Servile, I desire you would explain it to me. For the Almighty's saying, *That by Mens Sins (i. e. by the Breaches of his Laws,) he is made to serve*, is the highest Infamy, and Reproach to Disobedience; and may render it loathsome to any considering Person: And so, is Worthy to be insisted on something largely by you.

Eubul. In respect of his Nature, and Person, *Theophilus*, God cannot, for the reason you have given, be made to serve. Sin we with never so high an Hand, we cannot put any restraints upon his Nature; and be we never so Righteous, we cannot render his Person more Blessed. And to this Sense is that of *Job 35. 6. If thou be Righteous, what givest thou Him? Or what receiveth he of thine Hand? If thou Sinnest, what dost thou against Him? Break his Laws thou*

thou mayst, and provoke his Justice, but thou canst never render Him *less Perfect*, or *less Blessed*.

But then we must know, that God is pleas'd in Holy Writ, to speak after the *way and fashion of Men*; not so as is *perfectly agreeing* with his own Nature, but so, as is *most futable* to our Understandings, and may most prevail with, and move, us.

Thus *Eye, Ear, Mouth, Arms, Heart, Feet*, and such like *Members* are, in Sacred Scripture, attributed unto God, not that there are any such, in reality, in Him, (for He is a *Spirit*, and altogether *Incorporeal*.) But that we might, by these *Sensible Things*, the better conceive those *Perfections*, which are shadow'd out by them. For it is not unworthy of Observation, That there are no *Members* nor *Parts* of a Man ascribed unto God, in Holy Scripture, but what do betoken some *Excellence*, or *other in Him*; as his Power, his Wisdom, his Knowledge, his Love, and such like. And none of those *Parts* that are (as the Apostle terms them,) ἀδυνάστεα, ἀτιμώτερα, or ἀχίμωνα, more feeble, less honourable, or uncomely, are any where attributed unto Him.

The Jews have a Saying, *Lumen Supernum nunquam descendit sine Indumento*; *Heavenly Light never descends without some Vail*. It, otherwise, would be too bright for our weak Eyes. So these *Members* of the Body, which God is pleased to admit of, when he speaks of Himself unto Us, are but as *Coverings* to those *Excellencies*, which we could not so well understand, should He have spoken *futably* to Himself, without any respect had unto us.

And, as God doth condescend to our *Understandings*, by speaking unto us after an *Human manner*, and in a way below Himself; so in other things He speaks to move, and *excite our Affections*; when yet his Words are not to be thought properly to agree unto

unto him. Thus doth he in a favourable Sense, *Isai. 45. 11. Concerning the Work of my Hands, Command ye me.* Sovereignty we know Essentially belongs unto Him; and He can as soon lose his Being, as He can That: But that He may the more win upon us, He thus expresseth Himself; as if He had said, you shall not find me Lofty towards You: But so far condescending, as, in your Reasonable Requests, *to serve you.*

Thus also he is said to be *Angry*, to *Repent*, to be *pressed with Mens Sins*, as a *Cart is pressed with Sheaves*: Not that there can be in Him any such thing as the Passion of Anger, or of Repentance, or of Grief; for then there would be some alteration, and change in God: Which cannot be to the better, because he is infinitely Blessed; nor to the Worse, because then He would lose of his Perfection. And so, no alteration can there be in Him at all, and therefore the expressing himself thus, in Scripture, is the more to *prevail with us.*

The intent of what I have said is this: To wit, That God may be said, though not properly, yet, after the way of Human Speech, to be made to *serve by Mens Disobedience.* And those his Words in *Isaiah*, are as much as if he had said; *Thou hast done, what in thee lies, to make me serve by thy Sins.* Which way of Speech is highly moving, by shewing, that could he have been brought under, and made to serve, they, by their untoward Carriages, had done enough to effect it. Had he been a *Man*, this would have been the *fruit of his Favours to Them*; this their *Gratitude to Him.*

And truly, Wicked Men do in a sort effect, that the most High shall serve them even in his Person; by *putting him off from time to time*, and causing Him to attend their *Leisure.* Thus when He, as *St. John* speaks, *stands at the Door and knocks*; earnestly calling

calling upon them to turn unto him, that they may Live; they are not yet at *Leisure*; with *Felix*, they are apt to say, *Go thy way, for this time; when we have a Convenient Season we will send for Thee*. After so many years are past; or when such businesses are done; or such designs accomplished; or such Sins acted; then, it may be, they will hearken unto him; and is not this a making him *Serve*, when he must thus wait *their Motions*; as if their Wills were Superiour unto his; and *he* were rather to observe *Them*, then *They Him*?

Theoph. It is abundantly sufficient for the setting forth the hatefulnes of Disobedience, that it tends to invert the Universe; and to reduce Him into Servitude, whose very Being it is to be Supream of the World. Neither is the Violation of the Sacred Laws the *less odious*, because it doth not *actually effect this*. The Perfection of Gods Nature which cannot, in reality, suffer the least Diminution, doth not render the Nature of *That* the less Foul, which, were it possible, to do it, would trample upon his Majesty, and make him *Serve*.

Eubul. But I think, *Theophilus*, that *God's being made to Serve by Mens Sins*, may have a more proper Signification, if we consider Him not as to his *Person*, and *Nature*, but as to his *Name*, and *Works*. The former (as hath been said,) cannot be more or less Glorious than they are; but the later may be *Exalted*, or *Deprest* among Men; had in *Honour*, or *Vilified* in their Words and Practice.

And after this manner, God, in Sacred Writ, is said, to be *magnified*, though in himself, he be so Great that his Greatness can admit of no Addition. *O Magnifie the Lord with me*, (saith the Psalmist,) that is, as the next Words have it, *Let us exalt his NAME together*. And thus Exalted, and Magnified he may be, by being had in Reverence, *inwardly*,
of

of those who draw near unto Him, and *outwardly*, by being celebrated in a Religious Manner; in the Hearing, and View of Men.

Thus, likewise may he be *Less'ned*, or *brought Lower*; for, while we are call'd upon to Magnifie, and Exalt the Lord, it would be a fruitless Exhortation, unless it were possible that God should be thus Undervalued, and Vilified among Men.

He is *brought under*, when Men do *use his Holy Name* for the promoting those Designs which are contrary to his Infinite Purity, and Righteousness. He is also made to Serve, when *his Works* are prest for the carrying on of Evil Actions; contrary to that of Job 36. 24. where we are bid to remember that we *Magnifie his Works*.

Theoph. I acknowledge what you say to be so: But should more cheerfully do it, would you insist something largelier on these Things.

Eubul. As for his *Holy Name*, *Theophilus*, how do they make the Almighty to Serve *their Turns* only, when they use it for the appearing, in some Actions, to be *Religious*; not that they may bring any true Glory unto God, but that they may advance their *Secular Interest*, or their *Reputation*, among Men? Or yet worse, when they shall *pretend Piety*, for the more secure *acting of Wickedness*; abusing the Holy One into a *Mist*, as it were, which they'll throw before Mens Eyes, that they may not be discerned in their shameful Deeds?

And the same thing do they, when, for the obtaining their own unjust Cause, they shall procure others to *Swear* that which is not so; or when they shall lend their *own false Oaths* for the advantage of their Friend, or the Damage of their Enemy. Or when in some Evil Actions which they have been Guilty of, they shall make *dreadful Imprecations*, that God would Exemplarily punish them, if they be not In-
nocent

nocent as to the Thing they are charged with; presuming, it will not be unto them according as they have Cursed.

Add to this, *The frequent Usurping of Gods Sacred Name*, upon almost every trivial occasion, to *Vows or Oaths*, or to a *Vain swaggering*, and the *shameful Credit* of not appearing to be *strict and religious*. When that *Great Name*, the Reputation of which God stands so much up for, and which is the greatest Argument in our Exigences, for our prevailing with Him for Aid, (*What wilt thou do to thy Great Name?*) when that, which should establish all Truth in the World, is hal'd to the confirming the quite contrary: When that, at which the Devil trembles, shall be forced for the carrying on of his Hellish Service, do they not bring the Great and Holy God into the worst of Slaveries, into that which his Soul doth perfectly loath?

Theoph. By *what Stains* can we sufficiently conceive the *Foulness of Disobedience*? I have small reason to think, that what is so deform'd in relation to *God's Name*, will be any jot the better in relation to *his Works*.

Enbut. Altogether as odious is it in *These*, as in the *Other*. Look we first, *Theophilus*, upon Men; who, as they are Men, are the *Chief of God's Works on Earth*; his Image being lively imprest upon *Them only*; and we shall find that the transgressing of the Divine Precepts doth *debase Them*, and, in *Them*, the *Image*, and *Work of God*, to the vilest of *Drudgeries*.

When the *Understanding*, which is capable of the Knowledge of God, and should be exercis'd to the right conceiving of all Virtues, and the best Methods of bringing them forth into Action, shall be fill'd with Impure Conceptions, and wrought up to the Knowledge of all Wickedness, and of the readiest

diest ways of reducing it, upon all occasions, into practice.

When the *Will*, which ought to be bent to the pleasing of God, in an universal Compliance with his Laws, shall be forward in the desiring and prosecuting of Evil, and shall rest satisfied in the accomplishment of it.

When the *Memory*, which is so well fitted for God's Service, shall be far from retaining the great Mercies he hath shewed to Men in general, and to ourselves in particular, in various Circumstances of our Lives. When the excellent Things of God's Law are allow'd no room in it; but, on the contrary, when itself is chiefly imploy'd in the remembering of those things which are light, and vain; in the preserving present to our Minds the readiest ways of bringing about ill Actions; and in the keeping fresh those Injuries which by others have been done us, whether through Imprudence, Passion, or Design; that we may never, upon Opportunities, forget to revenge them.

When the *Affections*, which should be engaged in an *Holy Joy* at the great things which God hath done for us; in an *Unfeigned Love* to Him for his being so loving and gracious unto us; in a *Delight* in those Commandments, which are so agreeable to the Nature and Souls of Men; in an *Ardent Longing* for that Blessed State, where we shall be wholly freed from Sin: When *these Affections*, I say, shall be turned into *Coldness* towards God and the Things of Heaven; into an *hot and eager pursuit* after those things which minister only to *Worldly Advantage*, or *Sensual Pleasures*; into *Ill Wishes* towards others, *Envy* at their Welfare, *Delight* in their Troubles or Miscarriages.

And likewise, when our *Bodies*, which are Temples of the Holy Ghost, shall be alienated to pro-
phane

phane Uses ; when our *Members*, which are the *Members of Christ*, shall be made to become the *Members of Unrighteousness* ; our *Eyes* in beholding Vanity, our *Tongues* in uttering Deceit, or those things which *Minister not Grace to the Hearers* ; our *Hands* in doing that which is Evil ; our *Feet* in being swift in running to Mischief ; all of which were made for better Ends.

When *Men*, which were Created in the *Similitude of God*, and should, in their Actions also, be *like him*, shall through Disobedience have their *Bodies* and *Souls* brought under to *such vile Officers*, is not the Great God made to *serve* in the *Principal* of his *Handy-Works* on Earth ? Certainly he is.

We know, among Men, there may be a suffering of Indignities *in Effigie* ; in something that shall *represent* the Man, though his *Person* be *absent* or *untouched* ; and the Discredit shall redound to him, in great measure, as if he himself had in Person suffered. And will it be otherwise with the Almighty God ? We are his *Image and Likeness*, in respect of our *Souls* ; and *both in our Souls and Bodies*, we bear the *Image of his Son our Lord*, who was pleased to take upon him our *whole Nature*. If therefore Disobedience shall throw such Dishonour on his Image, and Workmanship in us, although it reach not his *Person* to hurt that, it yet makes him, through his *Works* and his *Image* too, (as we are his Works and Image,) to *serve*.

Neither doth it, *Theophilus*, any more spare the Almighty, in the *other visible things of the World*.

The Sun, and Moon, and Stars, in their Light and Influences ; The Earth, and Sea, and all the *Creatures* thereof in their several Capacities, He made instrumental to the Life, and Virtuous Actions of Men ; and, through them, to his own Praise and Glory. And therefore since They (as of themselves
being

being Mute,) cannot Celebrate the Praises of their Creator, *Man's Mouth* is to be *theirs*, and to offer up Praise unto God in their stead. Thus did the Royal Psalmist for them; Praise the Lord, ye Sun and Moon: Praise him all the Stars of Light. Praise the Lord, ye Heavens, and ye Waters that be above the Heavens. Praise the Lord from the Earth, ye Deeps; Fire and Hail, Snow and Vapours, Wind and Storm, fulfilling his Word. Mountains and all Hills; Fruitful Trees and all Cedars; Beasts and all Cattel; Creeping things and Flying Fowl, Psal. 148.

So likewise, since these *Visible Things*, of themselves, are unable to do any *Virtuous Deeds* in relation unto Men, our *Hands* are, in some sort, to become *theirs*, through which they are to promote Actions of Justice, of Kindness, and of Mercy. These are the Ends for which they were made; and, in them all, they are to do Service unto God.

But, *Theophilus*, our Disobedience to the Divine Law turns all these things another way; and makes the Holy God, in his Creation to be Instrumental unto Services which are quite contrary unto Himself.

When the Sun shall rise, and make the Day, only that those Sins may be acted, which require Daylight in the Commission; When it shall set, and Night come on, merely for the accomplishing of those Vices, which need *secretie* chiefly, and *darkness*. When *Malice* and *Ill Nature* shall strengthen themselves, by calling to their Aid whatever we possess, rather than fall unactive to the ground. When *what* should in *Sobriety* be imploy'd for the good of ourselves, and in *Charity* and *Friendship* for the Benefit of others, shall be abused to Intemperance, Covetousness or Ambition, is not God, through the Works which he hath Created, made to Serve? Yea, to Serve the worst of Beings, his greatest Adversary, in the worst of Services?

Theoph.

Theoph. Were it not that the Creation is by some Religious Men improved to right Ends, we might not wonder, if it should give Signs that it rather would be reduced to its first nothing, than be thus abused to the Dishonour of its Maker, and of itself.

Eubul. This Slavery, *Theophilus*, the Creature is, in a manner, sensible of, for the Apostle saith, *Rom. 8. 22. The whole Creation Groaneth, and travaileth in pain together until now; and all upon the account that it is made Subject unto Vanity, and brought under the Bondage of Corruption.* It is not willingly that it thus serveth the Prince of Darkness. It groaneth and travaileth in pain: Which expressions denote the State it is now in, to be a State of great Misery; and speak forth the greatest longing, and the most earnest Expectation to be delivered from it, into the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God: Where, as those Sons of God shall be freed from Sin, and shall do Service pure, and uncorrupted unto God; so the rest of the Visible Creation, which hath too much, and too long been forc'd to minister unto Vain Ends, and Ungodly Practices, shall be asserted also into that Freedom, where it never shall be employed more but in the true Service of God, whose Service is perfect Freedom. This, I doubt not, but those words the whole Creation groaneth, do signifie, not only Men, but the rest of the Creatures also, which have been for so long a time abused to Unrighteousness.

Theoph. If thus it be in respect of the Creatures, whose Being, as to a great part of them, is of the more insensible sort, we may be sure that He who is a Jealous God of his Honour, is more nearly concern'd,

Eubul. Yes, *Theophilus*, he is thoroughly Sensible, how Unworthily, in the Creations Thralldom, he hath been dealt with; and therefore all these things must have the Pollution, which hath been thrown upon them,

them, to be purged off. *The Heavens shall pass away with a great Noise; and the Elements shall Melt with Feruent Heat; and all the Works therein shall be Burnt up,* 2 Pet. 3. 10. and so shall be purified from their Corruption, and Stains. For v. 12. it is said, *We look for a new Heaven according to his Promise, and a New Earth, wherein dwelleth Righteousness;* all which Expressions, though by some they be made to signifie the Dissolution of the Jewish State, and the Establishment of the Gospel of Christ in the World, yet certainly they have relation to the *Last Day*, the *Day of Judgment* also; if not only unto That. And the Fire is denoted, as to destroy the Vain Works of Men on the Earth, so likewise to purify those parts of the Creation, which have, by Men, been abused unto Sin, and Vanity.

Theoph. Were the Foul Nature of Disobedience rightly discern'd, surely, *Eubulus*, all Men would abhor it. For could any one on this side Hell, be willing to bring such Servitude on God, such Thralldom on the Creation; and thereby, such unspeakable Deformity on Themselves?

Eubul. Such Evils are there in Disobedience, that when we think the worst of it, we think not bad enough, but we have as yet only in part seen it, of such an *Extensive Nature* is this *hateful Thing*, that it would spread itself beyond all Time, and Place. And so the Actors of it, although something *short-reach'd* they be in their *Deeds*, yet are not so in their *Will*, and *Desires*. Yea they may truly be said, to affect a kind of *Eternity* in their Sins.

The Pleasures of Wickedness in which they make God to Serve, (as hath been said,) how sorry are they, that they are of no greater a length! And, did they but know how to do it, how forward would they be to stretch them out into an Infinite Duration; and bind the Almighty all the way, to minister
to

to their Polluted Conversations! If Conscience within doth check them, full gladly would they remove it for ever out of their Breasts that it might disturb them no more. And Him, who in Heaven is the Lord of All, they would either wholly Dethrone, and Dispossess of all his Sovereignty; or else would entrust him with it no farther than to Serve their Humours, as they, upon occasion, should call for it.

Theoph. Pray give a particular Instance, or two, of what you now say.

Enbul. Take, *Theophilus*, the *Malicious Man* first, he cannot, it may be, do much against them whom he Hates; but he hath a Will to punish them Eternally, knew he but how. And this, methinks, those severe Curses too much speak out, when he Dreadfully, upon any Displeasure, bids God to Damn Them; and, as far as his Words and Wishes will do it, gives them over unto the Devil to be taken.

Neither is it any better with the *Ambitious Man*. He would be always rising above others; and the Great God must for ever administer to his Proud Wishes and Designs. If he, at any time, be disappointed in his Hopes and Enterprises, he inwardly rageth, and is, in effect, sorry that the Power of the Highest is not, so much, at least, in his Hand, as that he may exalt himself above all other Men; and continue there, without any fear of ever being Lower; thus far God *must* always Serve him; and when he should be accustom'd for some time to the greatest Height on Earth, we have reason to think he would next wish to be the Supream of Heaven too, and to extort the whole Power from the Creator of the World.

Some Men perhaps would think, that what I have spoken borders too much upon Fancy; but, *Theophilus*, in Reality, it doth not. And, well for us it is,
That

That there is a God above, who will not let go his Power; That his Laws are fixt, and that his Authority in them *will* never, *can* never, be overthrown: Happy are we, that Heaven will always be his Gift, and Hell be never otherwise than in his Disposals. Alas, what should we do, if we, and all things else were in the power of some Men! How miserable would their Malice and ill Nature make us to be on Earth! Upon what light Offences should we be sent quick into Hell! How would Heaven lie open to Pride and Ambition! How all the Work of our Redemption be trodden under foot! And those sacred Laws, in so much Righteousness and Mercy given us by our Lord, how turn'd into Confusion! Nothing is so evil, but, might they have their Wills, God's Power should serve for the accomplishing and perpetuating of it. And not only his Holy Name and his Works, but his Person and Glorious Attributes should be brought under, and made Vassals to their wicked Imaginations, and uncontroul'd Impiety.

Theoph. What could Disobedience do more, if God were an *Intruder* in the World? If he used his Power in an *Oppressive* way, and if Man were least of all Creatures fitted for his Service?

Eubul. Here it is, *Theophilus*, that Disobedience hath its Loathsomeness: For so far is the Almighty from being an *Intruder*, that there *was* no God formed before him, *neither shall there be any after him, nor is there any besides him.* He is the only *Potentate, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*; and so he usurps the Right of none, affects no unjust Power. The Heavens and the Earth *were the Works of his Hands*; nor hath he ever made over his Right to any other. None then can say, that he *intruded* into the World, and by *Injustice* holds the Dominion thereof.

Neither doth he Rule in an *Oppressive* way. At the first, constrain'd by no necessity, nor owing any thing to any one, and needing the Services of none, but prompted by his own Goodness alone, He, through his Power, gave Being unto Men. When he had this done, He honoured them with the Dominion over all Things in this Lower World; but much more he honour'd them in making them such, who could *discern Him, that Created them*, and could do him Service.

Indeed the meanest Creatures upon Earth, however senseless in their Natures, do yet serve God: *Even Snow and Hail, Wind and Storm, fulfil his Word*; but then they know not that they fulfil it, and so their Obedience, in respect of themselves, is less worthy. God may more truly be said to *serve himself of them*, according to the Expression of the Prophet, *Jer. 34. 10.* than they be said *properly to serve him*.

But Men he indued with a Reasonable and Intelligent Soul, by which they conceive what it is they do, and why they do it: And so having a sense of themselves and their own state, and, in some sort also, of the Greatness and other Infinite Excellences of the Lord whom they serve, *Their Obedience alone*, of all Earthly Creatures, may be termed the *Grace of Obedience*; and *They only* have the Honour to be, in *strictness and propriety of Speech, serviceable*, and obedient unto God.

Yea, when Men had deserv'd the Punishment of Death by breaking the Command of God, He, in infinite Mercy and Wisdom, contriv'd a way for the saving them from Destruction, by the pretious Death of his Son.

And in relation hereunto, He hath, by that his Son, given them *Commands* that are not *grievous*, Laws that are righteous and good, perfective of their Nature,

Nature, and truly useful to Society. He vouchsafes^s Assistances from Heaven for the Performance of them, and promises Everlasting Salvation after Death to those who sincerely observe them. And lastly, He sustains and preserves them, even while they sin against Him; when they could not breath, did not his Providence afford them Air; nor live, did not he give them Bread?

So that God may say to These, as he did to his Vineyard, *Isai. 5. Judge, I pray you, between Me and Them: What could have been done more unto them, that I have not done?* And for which of all these good Works do you throw Servitude upon me? What should more excite your Honour to me as a Father, your Fear to me as a Master, and your Love to me as a Friend, than these things? And if I am your Father, where is mine Honour? If I am your Master, where is my Fear? And if I am your Friend, (as none possibly can be more,) is this your Kindness to your Friend? Do you thus requite the Lord, ye foolish People and unwise, to make him to serve by your Sins?

Theoph. You said truly, that here it is that Disobedience hath its Loathsomeness. For where Disingenuity and Ingratitude do rise so high, (as here they infinitely do,) what deeper Stain can there possibly be?

And as one would wonder, how any should be willing to carry it so ill towards a gracious God, who hath beyond Expression deserved well of them; so one would no less wonder, that it could ever enter into the Heart of Man to say, That God by his Decrees hath necessitated them to Disobedience: That He cannot justly find fault, because who is it that hath resisted his Will?

Eubul. A Man would admire indeed, that any should be so absurdly unreasonable. For who would ever designedly bring himself into Dishonour; and

be the chief cause of that, which is most odious in his own Eyes? This, no wise Man, no, nor one but tolerably in his Wits, would ever do.

Let us but Attribute that Wisdom to *Him*, whom we acknowledge to be *infinitely Wise*, which, in these Circumstances, would never be wanting to *any Man* who hath *Common Sense and Reason*, and we may be quickly satisfied that God compelleth no one to Vilifie his Holy Name, his Image, and his other Works; and to bring them into the Service of the Devil; to the great Satisfaction and Delight of that his Enemy.

Let us not therefore say, *It is through the Lord, that we have done thus; for we ought not to do the things which he hateth.* Let us not say, *He hath caused us to Err; for the Lord hateth all Abomination, and they that fear God, love it not; as the Son of Sirach excellently speaketh, Chap. 15. Vers. 11, 12, 13. Or as the Holy Ghost himself saith in St. James, Let no Man say when he is tempted, (unto Evil,) he is tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with Evil; neither tempteth he any one. But every Man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own Lust and enticed, Chap. 1. 13. 14. God hath no need of the Sinful Man; and he hateth Evil, even while it shall seem to be done that good may come. And whosoever shall say, let us do Evil that Good may come, the Apostle telleth us, their Damnation is just.* How can any one then imagine, that God should necessitate Men to those Sins that strike directly at his Honour? And bring him as far as possible, and would yet further bring him, could it be done, into the worst of Servitudes?

Theoph. They highly dishonour God, who by their Disobedience do carry themselves Contemptuously. But yet those Persons, who make Him Himself to be the *moving Cause* of all this, do the *more dishonour him*; because they represent him as such an one who

who is not worthy of better Services than Wicked Men would Subject him unto.

Most Horrid abusers they Both are of the most Righteous and Holy God. But *why* (if I may lawfully enquire so far,) *will he permit such things against Himself?* Why will he not rather force Men into due Obedience, or else *Cut them off?*

A Wise Governor on Earth, when he sees himself struck at; his Favours abused; his Laws vilified; yea, the Ruin of his Person wished, will think the present time not too soon to punish such Notorious Offenders. And while God letteth those alone who thus Sin against him; using no restraints towards them; nor making them Exemplary in their Punishments; may he not seem to act below the Wisdom of Prudent Governours among Men? Are not the Criminals encouraged to continue in their Wickedness? And others also drawn by their Example into the same Excess of Iniquity? And may not Gods Government of the World hereby seem remiss?

Eubul. There is a great deal of difference, *Theophilus*, between *God* and *Those* who are Governors upon Earth. The Frail Condition of *These*, in the possibility of their Persons being really brought into Servitude, or destroy'd; and their Governments being weakned or wholly overthrown; requireth often times the speedy Punishment of *Those* who are Notorious Offenders.

But God in his Person is secure from all the Evils that can be wish'd or attempted against him. And however his Government may, in appearance, be less'ned, yet, in reality, his Power and Dominion can never be endangered, or diminished. For (as before was said,) he is infinitely perfect, and so is no way subject to any Change for the Worse, and therefore there is no need that God should make that

haste to restrain or punish the Disobedient as Earthly Princes must oftentimes, in Prudence, do.

Add to this, 'That many of those Sins against God, which deserve the severest Punishments, though they, by no means, can be for the Welfare of Society on Earth, yet do not immediately strike at, and disturb the Peace of the Community; or, at most, not in any eminent degree. And so the Necessity of Human Affairs doth not presently call for God as a Revenger.

Yet notwithstanding these things, we may with Truth say, *Theophilus*, That some of those who do with an high Hand sin against Him, God *sometimes* makes Examples of his Wrath; and in them doth vindicate his own Sovereignty and Power, which they, as much as in them lieth, have brought under and trampled upon. And this he so doth, as that they themselves may look upon it to be God's just Hand; and that others also may acknowledge it his doing.

But then, *Communities of Men*, which, by their publick Sins, make the Almighty to serve, are *always*, when those Sins are ripe, *punished in this World*; for they cannot with any reason be thought punishable in the next; because, all Bonds of Civil Society are utterly broken and evacuated by the Death of the Whole. Yea, and those *Private Men*, who have contributed their share to the Sins of a Nation as such, are also oftentimes, in some respect, punished in this World, even after Death, by Publick Calamities reaching their Children, or other Relations, in whom themselves are, in a manner, still here continued. Which, to one who rightly considers it, sheweth forth God's Righteous Judgments upon them.

But because it is not always safe to pronounce, That the untimely Deaths, or unexpected Miseries
of

of some particular Persons, are an immediate Stroke of God upon them for their Disobedience; (for our Christian Charity will not permit this, when we know no signal Crimes by them.) And the great Afflictions of some, who are not greater Sinners than other Men; and of some, whom we have reason to esteem as good Men, may caution us, in this point, not to be over-forward to Judge: And because also we see a great many wicked Men to live and become old; to be in no Troubles as other Men; to die in peace, and leave the rest of their Substance for their Babes; Therefore we may affirm it as a Truth,

Viz. That God seeth it fit generally not to cut off those Men; nor yet to force them into Obedience, who by their Disobedience do thus make him to serve.

He seeth it fit generally not to cut them off, that they may have space for Repentance. Thus did he to the Church of Thyatira; I gave her, saith he, space to Repent of her Fornication: And for this end may he spare these, dealing with them as the Lord did with the Barren Fig-Tree, hoping that though they be not fruitful this year, they will grow better the next. And this the rather, because from the thoughts of this Goodness of God unto them, they may the more effectually be prevail'd upon to repent. Despisest thou, saith the Apostle, the Riches of his Goodness and Forbearance, and Long-suffering, not knowing that the Goodness of God (in this his Forbearance and Long-suffering,) leadeth thee to Repentance? A Sorrow for former Sins, and an Acknowledgment of God's Sovereignty for the future, in Mens giving themselves up to his Service, may arise from other Considerations; but from none more directly or more forcibly, than from that of his sparing them, and suffering them to live, that they may Repent and Turn unto him.

Neither may it be a small Motive for his not generally Cutting them off; that in case they do not Re-

pent, there may, from their Freedom from Punishment in this Life, be afforded unto us *a strong Proof* that there will be *Another Life* after This; in which, those Sins which are here spared and Unrepented of, shall most surely be punished.

God is a Righteous God, and he hath told us plainly by his Prophet Nabum, Chap. 1. 3. *That he will not acquit the Wicked.* And it is not Unobservable, that These Words are put thus; to wit, *The Lord is slow to Anger, and great in Power, and will not acquit the Wicked:* As much as to say: Though he forbear long, yet it is not as if he could not punish; yea, if they shall go on in their Disobedience, and not Repent them of their Misdeeds, they most certainly shall have the Reward of their Doings.

Now, in that These Wicked Men, who, to the utmost of their Power, make God to Serve, do *often live and dye without Punishments*, they must necessarily be punished after Death; or else God will, contrary to his Word, *acquit the Wicked.* But the *Judge of the Earth will do Right*; though all Men shall be Lyars, yet God cannot but be True: And therefore he will not Cut them off, that he may make them a strong Argument that there will be a Day of Punishments, when this World is at an End with them.

And Lastly, *Throphilus*, we may not amiss think, he will suffer them to Live, that if They Repent not here, they themselves may hereafter, in the Other World, *confess that they are justly punished.*

Though Gods sparing their Lives in so much Mercy, when they had deserved to be struck Dead, or sent Living into Hell, were little minded by them on Earth, it yet shall, at the Great Tribunal, have this effect upon them, *viz.* To make them acknowledge that their *Damnation is Just*; because They had so much favour shew'd them, and they shut their Eyes upon it, And

And surely as Gods Gracious Designs of Mens Turning unto him, and being happy, do take off whatever can be Objected against his not presently destroying the Disobedient; So the *Reputation of his Justice*, which will by this means be Exalted, even among *Those that in Hell shall suffer it*, may abundantly Vindicate Gods Government of the World from being slack and remiss, though he do not immediately Condemn unto Death those who make him to Serve by their Sins.

Theoph. You have thoroughly satisfied me, why God doth not presently *Cut those off* who are Rebellious.

But since all Power is his, and with a Word He can do it, why doth he not *Force them* into Obedience; that his Sovereignty may be acknowledg'd by all; and not opposed, so much as in appearance, by any?

Eubul. One Reason may be; *Because he would have their Obedience to be their Virtue*; and such as shall become *Rational Creatures to give*. He, as *Elibu* saith, *Teacheth Them more than the Beasts of the Earth*; and *maketh Them Wiser than the Fowles of Heaven*, that they may know what Good, and what Evil is; and may be sensible of the Favours that are shew'd unto them. He hath given them a Will to choose, or refuse, what things are before them; And hath planted Affections in their Souls, by which Love and Gratitude may be Exercised.

Now, when they shall endeavour to Understand what is truly Good, and also what Gods Loving-kindness to them is; when they shall choose that which is best; and shall willingly serve Him whom they know to be the Lord of the World, and their Lord; Loving him for his Goodness, and striving to express Thankfulness to him, so far as they are able; when, I say, they shall do this, they will be Virtuous, and shew themselves such as their Nature and Make require they should be. But

But how unagreeable would it be for these Men to be forced contrary to their Mind and Will? Wherein would they be Commendable, should they do that which they could not help? And how unsuitable to Love and Gratitude is Violence and Constraint?

It is Love, that is chiefly acceptable from Men unto God: For He hath Loved them; and his Love should be answer'd with Love again. But true Love proceeds by the Persuasive Way; and never shews itself aright but when it is Willing and Free; and is wrought upon by kind Inducements, and endearing Motives; which are things that are at the greatest distance from Force.

Now, this persuasive Method God generally takes with Men, as being most suitable to their Natures; and the proper way to prevail with them for that Obedience, which, as it ariseth from their Willingness and Love, will be pleasing in his Sight. He multiplieth his Favours upon them; sendeth his Holy Spirit to quicken and excite him, by Sacred Allurements, and taking Suggestions; but never, with a mighty force to compel them; or, at most, very rarely; and that, upon very signal Occasions.

Yea, somtimes he useth the Severer Way; partly out of Judgment, but yet out of Love too: Commissioning Afflictions to fall upon them, if, by this means, he may prevail with them; yet always so, as that he leaves room for their Will; without which their Obedience would be of no worth with Him; and not their Virtue in the least, nor any way fit for Rewards.

This may be one Reason.

Another, why God will not Force them into Obedience, we may conceive to be this; *viz. That if they shall not by these gentle Methods be wrought upon, but*
all

shall still persist in their Sins, He may show his Power and Wisdom, in improving into his Service, and to his Glory, those their Sins, by which They, in appearance, made him to serve.

Thus did he in the King of Assyria, *Isai. 10.* Highly proud this King was, and very great; and his Greatness, which consisted in large Possessions, and Multitudes of Men, (the Works and Gifts of God both,) must be employ'd to no other Ends but the bringing under others; though by the most unjustifiable Methods of Unrighteousness and Cruelty.

Well; God sees the Designs of this Haughty Man, and he will not presently check him. The Jews were a Nation that had behaved themselves so ill, that God styles them *the People of his Wrath*. Against these now will God improve the Pride and Cruelty of this Assyrian; making Him his Rod to scourge Them: *O Assyrian, the Rod of mine Anger, I will send him against an Hypocritical Nation, and against the People of my Wrath will I give him a Charge to take the Spoil, and to take the Prey, and to tread them down like the Mire in the Streets, Vers. 6.* But that you may see this King had no good Design, but the quite contrary, it is said in the next Verse, *Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his Heart think so; but it is in his Heart to cut off Nations not a few: And therefore when God hath performed his whole Work upon Mount Sion and Samaria, in punishing them thus by the Pride of the King of Assyria, then will he also punish the stout Heart of that King, and the Glory of his Looks, Vers. 12.*

Thus those Actions that are least intended by Men to God's Service, will He by his Wisdom engage for his own Service; yet so as that they shall remain Sins still in the Actors, and shall at the last have the Recompence that is due unto them.

After

After the same manner also is it in other Sins : In the Covetous, God's Gifts must serve their greedy Desires ; and must be heap'd up for this End chiefly, that the Owners may have as little a Dependence upon Providence as may be. And, could they think their Treasures should ever administer to Free-handedness, and Liberality, it would be their Trouble. Yet these Men's sordid Desires and Actions, God, in his secret Wisdom, sometimes will order to serve, after some years, in the good Offices of Charity and Pity ; in that He, *who by Usury and unjust Gain encreaseth his Substance, shall* (when he little intendeth so,) *gather it for him that will pity the Poor.*

Innumerable Instances might be given of God's improving the contrary Designs of Men into his Glory. I will only say this ; That the Wisdom of the Almighty is, on Earth, in nothing more seen than in this I now mention. His Service is hardly more frequently carried on by the pious and righteous Actions of good Men, than it is by the indirect and crooked Practices of the Disobedient : God, as it were, *secretly arresting* their ungodly Contrivances, and bringing them about, without any Virtue of theirs, or thanks to them ; sometimes that the *Crafty may be taken in their own Craftiness* ; sometimes that the *Welfare of Good Men* may be the more promoted ; and, in all, that it may be known, That however Evil Men may endeavour to make Him, in his Holy Name and Works, serve their wicked Ends, He yet Himself is the *Great God that Ruleth over all* : And though *many Devices may be in Mens Hearts*, yet *the Counsel of the Lord That shall stand.*

And whosoever considereth This, together with the other Reasons, before instanced in ; why God doth neither Cut these Wicked Men generally off ; nor force them into Obedience, will have no
cause

cause to say, that God acted below the Wisdom of Prudent Governors on Earth; That Criminals are encouraged to continue in their Sins; and Others to come in, and be partakers with them, by their Example.

Theoph. I confess, what you have said, I cannot but assent unto: And do heartily acknowledge, that God is Merciful and Wise in his Dealings with the Children of Men.

Eubul. But though God doth sometimes abstain from punishing their Disobedience, and sometimes doth improve it for the effecting of what He himself would have done, yet it is not thereupon the less Loathsome in its own Nature, and Deform'd. It tendeth, as far as possible, for ever to Dissolve the Community betwixt God as a Lawgiver, and Men his Subjects.

And perchance we hence may not unmeetly discern, how agreeably *Rebellious Men are requited* in being *Eternally punished in Hell*. Their Will would have had their Wickedness uncontroul'd; and the pleasures thereof extended to an infinite Duration; and God must thus for ever have Ministred unto them, to the Eternal Overthrow of all that is Sacred. They suffer therefore no longer than they would have Sinned: And it is not Incongruous that they should for ever bear his Wrath, who, might they have had their Desire, would for ever have made Him to Serve under Them, for the maintaining of their Iniquities. But, *Theophilus*, it is time to conclude.

Theoph. The coming on of Night tells us it is. Yet I cannot, *Eubulus*, but make one Wish first, viz. That Men would be willing not to be imposed upon by the *false appearances* of Disobedience, (for very deceitful Colours it often weareth,) but would consider the true Nature thereof, in its *Genuine Uncomeliness and Deformity*. *Eubul.*

Exul. It would be well if they would so do. For I dare appeal even to Wicked Men themselves, whether it would not seem grossly ill in their Eyes, if those Servants, who, by duty, and many particular Favours, are obliged to Honour, Reverence, and Love their Good Master, should, instead of doing That, cause Him to *gird himself*, and to *Serve Them till they have Eaten and Drunk*; and afterwards bid Him to *Eat and Drink*. Whether yet it would not seem much worse to them, if these Servants should constrain their Lord to *those shameful Actions*, which the vilest of Slaves would be thought too good for. I doubt not but such Servants they would abhor; and think no punishments great enough for Them.

The Case stands worse in their own making God Serve by their Disobedience. For no Earthly Master can deserve so much Honour and Love of a Servant, as God doth of Them. Neither can any Servitude, even in the most noisome Circumstances, be so loathsome to a Master here, as the Service of their Sins is unto God. And is it a becoming thing, that He, who is God over all, should be thus Vilified by his own Creatures? That He, *before whom the Angels Cover their Faces*, and whose Courts, *We*, even in our best Services, are to approach with Fear and Reverence, should be so far profaned, as, without any regard to his Greatness and Holiness, to be brought lower than the meanest of all his Works; into a Bondage, of itself, useful to no good End? Sure, the Horrid Villany of the thing may make them abominate it. Especially, since They, who, of all this lower World, are the meetest to Serve God, are the *alone Creatures* that Disobey him. All things here, even to the meanest Worm that creeps, do his Will in their several places; and shall Men be the failing, yea, the Rebellious part of the Creation? And, instead of serving God with the rest of his

his Works, shall they force those his Works from his Service; and themselves make Him, by their Sins, to Serve?

Theoph. In good Truth, while they thus do, they bring the greatest Slavery upon Themselves; in that they Serve many Masters; and those such as are contrary the one to the Other. This Vice bids go; That, at the same time, Wills them to stay. Covetousness prompts them to hold fast; Ambition urges them not to Spare; Pride makes them to despise Others; and yet, to their great uneasiness, to fawn that they may rise higher. A most uncertain Slavery it is, and no less difficult. What underhand Contrivances! What Glozings with those they cannot abide! What Infidelity to them whom they pretend Friendship unto! What Fears of being found out! What Evil Industry to keep all private! No Servitude can surely be worse.

Eubul. But, *Theophilus*, wee'l now leave these Men: Putting up Prayers to God for them; that they may remember such things as these; bring them seriously to their Minds; Weigh them in their most deliberate Thoughts; and, by so doing, instead of being Transgressors, shew Themselves to be Men.

DISCOURSE the Ninth.

The Contents.

THe Plea of those is vain, who say, they never sinned maliciously against the Almighty; nor wish'd his Greatness and Power to be less. The Difference betwixt Rebellion against God, and that against a Temporal Prince. Disobedience a defilement in whomsoever it is. Not the same Pollution in all Sins. What the Sins of Good Men are; and how known to be theirs. The Sins of wicked Men of a deep Dye; wherein they differ from those of pious Men. The Difference between wicked Men; How, of the worst sort, some are more open, some more secret, in their Sins. How the Sins of the less evil sort are to be measur'd. The same fairness of Converse not equally innocent unto many. A Sin may be a pardonable one to some, when the very same, to the Eye and Opinion of Men, will not be so to others. What we are to think of the Heinous Sins of Good Men, Registered in Holy Scripture. No reason from them for wicked Men to think better of their own Sins. God will not esteem the Sins of his Children, which
are

are in themselves as great as, and the same with, the Sins of other Men; to be therefore the less, because they are committed by those who are his Children. How to make a Judgment of our own Sins.

THEOPHILUS.

THE great Deformity and Disorder which Disobedience carrieth along with it, are not things made probable by Discourse only, and then growing less or none, when second Thoughts and retired Contemplations are engaged in them. The serious Reflection upon what you here last said, gave Strength and Confirmation thereunto. And from thence my Resolutions against Disobedience, as a thing, in its own Nature, foul and deformed, grew the more strong also.

But, *Eubulus*, I have heard some, of none of the best Morals, endeavouring to extenuate the illness of Disobedience, by saying, *That they never maliciously sinned against the Almighty; Never wished his Greatness and Power to be less; and by indulging themselves in some things prohibited by the Sacred Laws, they gratified indeed their own Inclinations, but did no great Injury unto Men, much less design'd Ill unto God.* Will the Plea of these Men stand them in any stead for the making their Disobedience to be no such thing, as yesterday you discours'd of?

EUBULUS.

NO indeed, *Theophilus*, will it not. For what Quietness soever there may seem to be in their Sins, they will be found of dangerous Consequence,

if nearer look'd into. It is not in Mens Rebellions against God, as in those against an Earthly Governour. There, Tumults are raised; Arms are taken up; and the Diminution, or, it may be, the Destruction of the Prince wish'd and threatned, because he is not out of a possibility of being weakned and destroy'd; and such Methods are oftentimes likely enough to effect it. But God, because he both is, and is acknowledg'd to be, Immortal, and out of the reach of all Force, hath no Swords drawn against Him; no Designs laid for his Overthrow; nay, is not by many so much as wished not to be, because they know such Wishes are to no purpose.

Their way therefore of Rebelling is to break his Laws; *To think him such an one as themselves are*; One who either cannot, or who will not, take any notice of them: Or, it may be, to *Own Him*, as to his *Attributes*, to be such as he is, yet hoping thereby that their good *Opinions* of Him will *make amends* for bad *Practices*.

But how little do such Thoughts mitigate their Sins? If they shall imagine God to be such *who cannot see them*, is the Robbing him of his Omniscience so small an Offence? Because it maketh no Noise, and with Calmness layeth Dishonour upon Him, whose Eternal Glory it is to know all things, is it therefore an excusable, good-natur'd fault? We may as well call *Joab's* Carriage to *Amasa* excusable and good-natur'd, when he said, *Art thou in Health, my Brother?* and then *smote him under the fifth Rib*. For God's Omniscience cannot more surely be overthrown towards a Man, than by such Imaginations; which, though in appearance mild, are deadly in the issue.

If they shall think, that God will not *take notice* of them; is it such a moderate and harmless Transgression to make the Holy and Good God, to favour Intem-

Intemperance? to look slightly on Unchasteness? to be at good terms with Idleness and Sloth? I remember that *Plutarch*, in relation to Mens Evil Thoughts of the Deity, saith, *He had rather it should be said, There is no such Person as Plutarch in the World, than that it should be said, He is after such and such a manner Vicious.* And surely, these, who imagine God so vile as to approve of those things which in Men are shameful, are no less wicked than they who deny there is any God at all. For his Being cannot be conceived to be Dear to him, without his Holiness.

If lastly, they shall own him, as to his *Attributes*, to be *such as he is*, hoping that their good Opinions shall make amends for bad Practices, what a strange Contradiction is this? They acknowledge him to be Just, that he may not punish Unrighteousness; Holy, that he may favour Impureness; True, that he may over-look Falseness; Good, that Evil may not be discouraged: Can there be greater Indignities offered unto the Holy One and the Just, than these are? Can any one be so wicked as to think, that because he is not edged with a sensible spight in these things against God, he therefore is a very pardonable Sinner? Or can he be so foolish as to imagine, that these his Sins are wholly free from Maliciousness? Were it so that Malice could effect any thing against the Almighty, it would quickly shew itself openly; but since it cannot, it lieth hid; yet hath the same pernicious Tendencies, as if it appear'd more in view; and, in other Garbs, doth act the very same things.

Theoph. But is there, *Enbulus*, the same Pollution and Defilement in *all Sins*? I therefore enquire this, because there is no one living that can say, he hath not Sinned. And some, I am sure, would by no means bring such Defilement upon themselves, nor

such Disorder into the World through their Sins, as you have mentioned to be the effects of Disobedience.

Eubul. I cannot say that there is the same Pollution and Deformity in all Sins. There is somewhere in Scripture (I think in *Deut.* 32. 5.) such an Expression as This; *Their Spot is not the Spot of his Children.* Which sheweth that there is a greater Pollution in some Men than in Others; but yet that Sin, wheresoever it is, is a Defilement; a Spot both to the One and the Other Sort.

Theoph. Since there is none that is wholly free from Disobedience, and Disobedience hath a different Deformity in different Sorts of Men, Good and Bad; pray, *Eubulus*, tell me, what is the Spot of each; and wherein it is that they differ.

Eubul. I will endeavour to do it; and the rather because it is of Material Consideration as to what we have been discoursing.

As for Those that are Good Men, They are Partakers of *Original Sin* as much as any other: Since they were no less than others in *Adam's Loyns*, when he transgressed Gods Command. And if a *Clean thing cannot be brought out of an Unclean one*, there is a Pollution belonging unto Them. Their Nature, as they are Men, is Corrupted; Darkness and Error is in their Understandings: Their Wills and Affections are Irregular, and Prone to Evil; and their Bodies joyn their Allurements to the Evil Inclinations of their Souls.

And as thus they are not Clean from Original Sin, so they have many *actual Sins* springing therefrom. *David* asketh a Question at large, *Who is it can tell how oft he offendeth?* Even He, that most taketh heed to his ways, can He tell how oft he sinneth? Besides the Faults which he may have observed in himself, there are many secret ones which he may
pray

pray to be delivered from. St. Paul saith, *Though he knoweth nothing by himself, yet is he not thereby justified*; and so may every good Christian say also. Though he be not conscious to himself, that at such a time he sinned; in such a Concern he fail'd of his Duty; yet he cannot certainly plead innocence before God. For his Offences reach further than his Knowledge; His Understanding, by reason of the first Parents Sin, being so imperfect, that many times he cannot discern the Failures he hath been guilty of.

But then the Disobedience of Good Men, whether Natural or Actual, is, through the Grace of God, *the occasion of many Virtues in them*, whereby they become acceptable in God's sight.

The Imperfection of their Nature rendereth them *humble*. They, observing the many Defects that are in their Souls, and the depraved Constitutions of their Bodies, do see a great deal of reason for Humility of Spirit.

As their imperfect State in this World is a *Punishment* just upon them, they will bear it with Patience, and not be tumultuous, and unquiet, as if God had dealt hardly with them. They will not behave themselves *proudly* towards others, as knowing that Pity and Kindness rather become those who are in the same Condemnation. Thus will they *do*, and thus *be*, while they consider their imperfect State in this World to be their *Punishment*.

As it is their *Sin also*, and a Defilement upon their Natures, they will be affected with Sorrow; yet will not be *desponding* and idle; nor so *contented* with their Sin, as not to endeavour to correct it by a Religious Carefulness and Industry; knowing that it is the part of Negligence to let Original Sin lie unmeddled with; and to rest satisfied both in that, and in their other Sins; as if these did necessarily flow

from the Imperfection of their Nature, and could not any way be helped. They will make it their business to clear their Understandings, to rectifie their Wills; to reduce into order their untoward Appetites; and to bring under their Bodies; that though they cannot wholly wipe off their Original Pollution, yet the ill effects of it may be as few and as small as they can possibly make them.

As for their *Actual Sins*, these stir up in them an *Heartly Sorrow*; an *holy Indignation*, and *Revenge*. Troubled really they are, that they have offended so Good a God, and so Gracious a Father. Thoroughly angry with themselves that they have made such ill Returns to One who hath infinitely obliged them; and Revenging it upon themselves by unfeigned Acts of Mortification.

These their Sins will also occasion their more frequent and fervent Devotion. They will freely, and without so much as hiding one, confess their Iniquities before God: Heartily acknowledging themselves *less than the least of his Mercies*. Earnestly begging that He, through Jesus Christ, will forgive them. They will not *let him alone*, will give him no Rest, till they have obtain'd his Favour. And so, by how much they heretofore have, in the Commission of Sins, been at a distance from God, they now, by seriously calling them into Remembrance, and truly repenting of them, will the more, and the oftner draw near unto God, in Prayers and other Acts of Religious Worship.

Their former Sins beget in them the Resolution of never Sinning knowingly and presumptuously for the time to come. Those Words in *Job* they will heartily say, and think them but meet to be said unto God; *I have born Chastisement, I will not Offend any more. That which I see not, teach thou me: If I have done Iniquity, I will do no more.* The Remembrance
of

of their past Offences will quicken them to new purposes, and firm Resolves of Upright Walking for the residue of their Life. They will say, *I thought on my Ways*, I considered my former Sins, and I am resolved to *turn my Feet to thy Testimonies*. And as it is my full resolution never more to commit Sins Willingly, so do thou by thy Restraining Grace *preserve thy Servant from Presumptuous Sins*.

If they through *Frailty and Oversight*, or through any *Eminent Temptation* fall into some Sins, they will not *continue* in them, but get out of them as soon as may be. They may, as Travellers, (for themselves are such; they are Travelling towards Heaven,) they may, I say, as Travellers, sometimes by Chance, and against their Wills, slip into the Dirt; but they will quickly step out of it; accounting it their Unhappiness that ever they were sullied with it. Nay, if they fall into Sin, they not only will not continue in it, but from their Failings will become the more *earnest Persuaders* of that which is good. As we often see our Beasts (if I may be allow'd to use the Comparison,) after a stumble to go the faster, so will they, after a slip, make the more haste in Heavens way. They will *love God* the more, because by these new Offences they have the *more to be forgiven them*. From their own Sins against God, they will the *more readily forgive* the Sins which others have committed against them. They *will redeem the Time*, and do much in the few Years that remain, for those good Actions which they have left undone, and for those Offences which they have committed. And if ever Sins can be improved aright, it is when they are made Incitements to more Duty.

And, lastly, The Sins which they, through frailty, daily run into, and cannot by all care and diligence be wholly free from, do excite and prompt them *to long for that happy State after this Life*, in

which they shall be fully cleansed from all Sin, and never shall give God the least Offence more. When will the Time come that they shall be no more troubled with daily Failures in their Duties! How long will it be that their Souls shall be perfectly bent to all Goodness, and their Bodies have the Imperfection of Temper and Constitution taken away! *O that they should be constrained to dwell in Mesech, and to have their Habitation among the Tents of Kedar! O that they had Wings like a Dove; then would they fly away and be at rest!* They'll say, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly; that so, They, with all those departed this Life in the true Faith, and Fear of God, may have their perfect Consummation and Bliss both in Body and Soul. Such earnest Desires do their frail and imperfect Conditions, and their every days Failings stir up in them.

Thus, *Theophilus*, the Sins of good Men have a Defilement in them; but such as is easily discern'd from that of others.

Theoph. Much different, I must confess, it is from the Deformity of Disobedience, as you yesterday Character'd it. The Sins of good Men owing more, as may seem, to the Frailty of Human Nature in common, than to the Wills of themselves in particular. But I will now desire you to speak to the Sins of the other sort of Men, viz. *Those who are Wicked.*

Eubul. The Sins of these, *Theophilus*, are of a far deeper Die; and carry a much greater Deformity than the Sins of good Men do.

The Scripture speaks of them as *Scarlet and Crimson ones*; not for the Beauty of the Colour, we may be sure, but for the Depth of the Stain: For who can make Scarlet as Snow, or Crimson white as Wool?

See we first the Sin of their Nature. And this indeed is not, in itself, greater than that of the better sort of Men. For all Men in Adam sinned equally; neither

neither is one more guilty of that Sin than another.

But then herein consisteth the greater Deformity of wicked Men in respect of Original Sin. They are *contented* and *well enough pleas'd with it*. What evil Inclinations they have are not grievous to them. They esteem their imperfect State as no unhappiness at all: Are not in the least affected with it; see no Punishment at all in it. Yea, they increase the Defilements of their Nature thus.

The *Ignorance* which from the Womb they have of Divine things, they *improve* into a *Willingness* that there should be no God; and into a *Readiness to Dispute* him out of their *own Hearts*, and out of the *World too*: And would fain imagine him to have no Being at all, that they may not have such an one to *Raign over them*.

They *encourage* their *depraved Wills* by Obeying them as far as they can; and they would do it further, if Fear, and Shame, and Loss from Human Laws and Customs did not prohibit them: And that they are thus prohibited it is their inward trouble.

Their *Corrupt Desires* they are so far from repressing and keeping under, that they *foster and cherish* them. It was an ill Character of one of the Roman Emperours; *Jacentes excitavit Libidines*; He stirr'd up, and used Arts to awaken his Lusts, which otherwise would have been quiet and asleep. So is it with these: They give no rest to their vile Affections; and spur their depraved Nature to a greater height of Depravation.

If we consider their *Outward Actions*, we shall find they are not *equally notorious* in all: But yet in *all* they are much different from those of good Men.

Wicked Men, *Theophilus*, are of two sorts. Those that are *more wicked*, and those that are *less*. For we read in Holy Writ, of a greater Damnation; and in Hell, we believe, there are Degrees of Torments,

ments, more intense for some, and less intense for others: And yet those, who are in the lesser Degrees of Torment, have been wicked Men.

As for the former and *worse sort*, the Scripture speaks of them thus: *They proceed from Evil to Evil. They weary themselves to commit Iniquity. They bend their Tongue like their Bow to speak Lyes. They lie in wait for Blood. They hunt every Man his Neighbour with a Net. They do Evil with both Hands earnestly; Corrupt are they, and have done abominable Iniquity; They are altogether become filthy.*

Now the Deformity of These is sometimes more open, sometimes more secret.

Some, were their Lives thoroughly look'd into, I Fear, without uncharitableness used towards them, they would be found to have wholly laid out themselves in the Service of Sin. Could the Time be Computed rightly which they have spent in Defraudations and Oppressions; in Surfeitings and Drunkenness; in Defaming and Evil Censuring; in Telling Lyes of, and unto, their Neighbor; in Begetting and Fomenting of Differences; in Acts of Unrighteousness and Dishonesty; and, at the best, in giving up themselves to Earthly Profits, or looser Recreations; we may doubt the rest of their Days would be very few; and their whole Lives little less than a continued Blot.

These are They generally, that are careful to avoid the being thought to be any whit Religious; and do Vilifie with Derision the Constant and Sober Exercise of Devotion; being Strangers to the Name of God, unless in an Oath or Curse, or other Vain ways of Speaking. Not unlike to those in the Prophet, *their words have been Stout against God; in that they have said it is in vain to serve God; and what profit is it to keep his Ordinances?* Mal. 3. 14.

Such Spots as These, are to every ones Eye of a deeper Stain than Those of Good Men are.

But then the Pollution of some of These, who are of the worse sort of Wicked Men, are more Secret than those I have mention'd are. Secret indeed, in respect of Men; but altogether open to the Eyes of God.

Such is theirs, who will use a plausible Deportment that they may the more securely carry on, and act the worst Designs. Sometimes that their fair De-meanor to some may be as *Bribes* to make them overlook their Enormities to Others. Sometimes that they may be the *least suspected* by those, whom they intend most Mischiefe unto. Of These the Psalmist may seem to Speak; in saying, *the Words of their Mouths are smoother than Butter, having War in their Hearts: Their Words are softer than Oyl, yet be they drawn Swords. They Bless with their Mouth, but Curse inwardly.* Such as These our Saviour means, when he bids his Disciples to beware of Those who *come in Sheeps Cloathing; but inwardly are Ravening Wolves.*

If they shall use *Pretences of Religion*, while they do such things, they are the more deformed by appearing like Christians. As we justly account an Ape the more ugly for being like a Man, the handsomest of Creatures, and not being One.

And if they shall *for Religions Sake* do these things; Contrive the Ruin of a Nation; Delight in Blood; Trample upon Laws, Government, and Governors; Stifle the Dictates of Nature; and, in a Word, turn out all Religion, that they may introduce That which they miscall Christianity, (for This, sure, is quite of another Spirit, and instructs us in the Exercise of Righteousness and Goodness; Kindness and Mercy,) I say, if *for Religions Sake*, They shall do these Things, so Black is their Spot, that

that we have very good reason to say, it is not the Spot of Gods Children.

A Spot it is of the *worst sort of Deformity*: Since it doth, in a manner, cast a *Blot* upon the *pure, and peaceable Religion of Christ*; and renders it, in the Eye of those, who are without the Pale of the Church, and who value the Goodness of Religion rather from the Practice of its Professors, than from the Precepts which it gives; I say, it renders it in the Eye of Those to be Vile and Odious. For, how secretly soever such actings are carried on and maintain'd, they, for the most part, are *found out at last*; and Gods Providence doth in an especial manner engage itself for the *Detecting them*; But yet though they be justly punished, in being laid Open, and Condemn'd before Men, yet the Enemies of Christianity look not so much on the *Justice of their Punishment* who were the Actors, as on the *Religion* which they profess'd; and so, that *Holy Name is Blasphemed*, by which they were called.

I must confess, that Wickedness when it walketh *bare Faced*, and hath an *Whores Forehead*, is loathsome, as for its inseparable Stains, so for its Accessional Impudence. But there is the like Difference between the Sins I am now speaking of, and those which to Men are more Visible, as there is between a Rock in the Sea, which appears above Water, and That which lieth under it. They are both dangerous; and if Tempests arise, the Sailers may suffer Shipwrack on the One, as well as on the Other: But in a Calm Sea, that which is seen may be avoided; when upon the Other, while no Danger is feared the Vessel may Split.

Theoph. Such Deformity do These Sins include, that they need not an over-Discerning Eye to tell us what Persons they are to whom they belong. But, *Eubulus*, you were saying, that of *Wicked Men*, so ne
we.e

were less Wicked. Pray, who are they? And what their Sins?

Eubul. They may be such as in their *Converse with Men* are sometimes not much to be found fault with. But their Sins may be understood from the Consideration of these following Things.

1. The Internal Obedience, and Cleanness of Heart, which the Precepts of Jesus Christ require.
2. The Excellent Ends for which all the Actions of Men are commanded to be done.
3. Those many particular Obligations which may lye upon them, for the being Righteous and Holy Persons.

First, then, though the outward Deportment be not Incommendable, yet if Internal Obedience, and Cleanness of Heart, be wanting, the Sins are those of a Wicked Man.

It was the Character of the Covenant which God made with Men under the Gospel; to wit, *I will put my Law in their inward Parts, and Write it in their Hearts, Jer. 31. 33.* And therefore what ever good Action they do outwardly, if they approve not of it in their Hearts; if they look upon their Civility and Honesty, their Charity and Mercy, and other such like Virtues, to be a *Debt due to Custom*; and do within their own Hearts esteem it their *Slavery*; and could wish themselves rid of it, as of an Unhappiness; secretly grudging at those things, which yet they would have others Praise them for; their Sins are much different from those of good Men.

For they who are in reality good Men, are to have their outward Actions to be the Expressions of inward Integrity; and in no respect to be contrary unto it. And unless the Soul shall cast a Beauty upon their
their

their External Practice, however it may seem fair among Men, who cannot search and know the Heart, yet in the Sight of God there will be such Pollution, as none that belong unto Him are stained with.

And so it will be, if (*in the Second Place,*) their Actions be not design'd to the Excellent Ends the Gospel speaks of.

Nothing should be done by a Man, but what is intended to Gods Glory. *Whether ye Eat or Drink, or whatever you do, saith the Apostle, do all to the Glory of God.* And every thing also, which Men professing Christianity are to do, is to be done with an *Eye to the Recompence of Reward*; which is the Salvation of their Souls. And indeed whatever is to be done for the Glory of God, must be done for their Eternal Happiness also; since the Glory of God is in nothing more seen than in the Everlasting welfare of Men.

Now if God and his Glory be not in all their Thoughts; if some Under-Ends be the Chief Design of their Actions; and they can look no higher than to the obtaining something in this World; if Praise or Profit, or Pleasure be the *Ultimate* of their Endeavours and Aims; if the Life and Immortality, which by our Lord are brought to Light, be little accounted of, and not permitted to have any share in what they do, their Sins have a Pollution beyond what Good Mens have.

I do not say, that even Religious Men must necessarily, with an *Actual Intention*, in every the least Action, have respect to Gods Glory, and their own Eternal Welfare. The Imperfection of their Nature; the many Circumstances they may be in; and the quickness which is requisite to many of their Actions, will not permit this. But an *Habitual Intention* for Gods Glory, and their own Happiness after this Life is done, is absolutely necessary. And where this is wholly wanting; where Temporal con-
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cerns are the only things that engage the Thoughts ; where the good Actions that they do are steered only by Earthly Inducements ; how *little Discommendable*, yea, or how *much Commendable* soever these Actions may seem to be, they are deeply polluted in the Judgment that God will make of them ; and are peculiar to none but the worse Sort of Men.

Thirdly, If the many particular Obligations which are laid upon them be not look'd into ; If they are no more taken notice of than if they belong'd not at all unto them : If the Knowledge which they have, and the greater Capacities with which they are endow'd, have no better Effect than the Ignorance, and weak Abilities of the meaner sort : If signal Mercies received make no Impressions of Gratitude upon them : If peculiar Motions, and strong Inclinations from God's Holy Spirit, to such and such Duties, be not complied with ; Though all their Behaviour in the sight of Men be fair and innocent, yet I cannot say that their Spot is the Spot of God's Children.

For although we are apt to think, that Sin consists only in doing those *Unrighteous Deeds*, which would be discernably bad in every one ; yet I suppose that those Actions which would *save* some Men of a *Low Rank* and *Mean Capacities*, would not be *acceptable* unto God in *some other Men* ; were they not improved, in good sort, according to those Measures of Knowledge and Abilities which God hath given them. And, in the way of Life, the same fairness of Converse shall not be alike innocent to many : But these shall be defective and unrewardable in the sight of Him who is the Judge of the Earth, and will judge Righteous Judgment, while the others shall be commendable and accepted.

I may give you this familiar Instance. If some Real Objects of Charity shall offer themselves unto *Two Men*; the One of a *Mean Estate*, and the Other of a *very Great One*; and these Two, in the constant Tenor of their Lives, should do thus; *viz.* The Meaner according to his Abilities supply the Indigences of the Miserable; the Other give also, not according to his *Abundance*, but just as the *Meaner Person hath done*; you would, *Theophilus*, pronounce the former to be charitable and good, but not so the later. Just so, greater Capacities and Endowments; larger Assistances, especial Favours, and peculiar Engagements to higher Degrees of Duty, will be look'd upon by the All-wise God, to be, as it were, a larger *Spiritual Estate* which such or such a Man possesseth. If then with all this he shall do no more than just so much as ordinary Men, whose Abilities are much less, Engagements much fewer, and Mercies less signal; as you rightly condemned the Uncharitable Rich Man in those Instances which were open to your view, so we shall not think amiss, if we conceive that the Just God will not be pleased with *This Man*, who, in his Eye that seeth the Heart, standeth not in unlike Circumstances with the Other. For to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and we have no reason to doubt but He, who hath received much, and returns but little, will be hardly more, if at all more, excusable, than He who hath received little, and returns nothing.

Thus may it be in the ordinary seeming innocent Lives and Converse of Men amongst one another. A Pollution there may be, when yet we cannot discern it, and when we are bound to judge according to the best appearance; it being no more than Justice, and ordinary Charity to interpret things well, whenever we see nothing of ill.

And

And from what hath been said, *Theophilus*, the Case, in those things, which are acknowledg'd by all to be Sins, will be Evident.

That Sin may be a *Pardonable Sin* in *one Man*, when the very same to the Sight and Opinion of Men, *will not be so in another*. If the Man hath had close and Earnest Warnings of his Conscience before; if there hath been, as it were, a Voice behind him, saying, *This is the way walk in it*; if the Motions of God's Spirit have more vigorously acted his Soul; if his Mercies have pointed directly to what he ought to do: And notwithstanding all these things, (which are discernable only to God and himself,) he shall commit the Sin; The Sin, though the same in the common repute of Men, with what another committeth, shall yet be a much deeper Stain to *This Man*, than to *That* it would have been.

Theoph. But, *Eubulus*, there are very heinous Sins of some *more than ordinary Good Men*, registred in Sacred Scripture: As the *Adultery and Murder* committed by *David*: The *Denial of Christ* by *Peter*; as also the grievous *Cursing and Swearing*, which he, together with that his Crime, was guilty of. I pray you, what are we to think of these Sins? and what would you reply to those unhappy Inferences, which too many Men are apt to make therefrom? As for Example, they will say;

First, That none of the Sins which they indulge themselves in, are so great as *David's* and *Peter's* were; and so they have reason to be confident, that their *own Sins* are not the Sins of wicked Men.

Secondly, That the same Sins, in full as aggravating Circumstances in God's Children as in others, will yet not be look'd upon as so great Pollution in them, as in those others; and this, merely upon the account that they are his Children. For *Numb.* 23. 21. *God hath not beheld Iniquity in Jacob; nei-*

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ther hath be seen Perverseness in Israel. And so, if they can persuade themselves that they are the Children of God, (which many times they easily can do,) how great soever their Sins already be, or, at any time hereafter, shall be, yet their Spot, they'll think, will not be more than the Spot of good Men.

Enbul. It is observed of some, that they are more skilful in the Failings of their Governours, than in their Virtues, or in their own Obedience. And after the same manner may we say of these: They are better versed in the Faults of good Men in Holy Writ, than in their Virtues and Graces; or in that Obedience which themselves owe unto God.

In relation therefore to those Sins of good Men, and also the ill Inferences which these Men are apt to make from them, we say, *Theophilus,*

1. That those Sins, though great they were, were yet rather single Acts than Habits of Sin. They were not approved of, nor contrived for, every day of their Lives; nor did they last for Years.

Now, single Acts are rightly esteemed not to carry so much Pollution as Habits do: Because an Habit is acquired by Actions often repeated; and so includeth the Defilements of many single Acts put together.

If it shall be said, that the single Acts of some heinous Sins may possibly carry a stain with them as great as some Habits of lesser Sins; and that the Sins of *David* and *Peter* were *gravioris Note*, of a deeper Dye; it cannot yet but be granted, that a single Act of a grievous Sin is less polluting than the Habit of the same Sin.

But then, Secondly, Those Sins, though very great they were, had Repentance following them, which was truly great.

Look we upon *David*, and we shall find him grieving in earnest, and heartily affected with his Misdeeds: *Psal. 38. 2. Thine Arrows stick fast in me, and thine Hand presseth me sore; There is no soundness in my Flesh by reason of thine Anger, neither is there any rest in my Bones because of my Sin. For mine Iniquities are gone over mine Head; as an heavy Burden they are too heavy for me. I am feeble and sore broken, I have roared by reason of the Disquietness of mine Heart. And in Psal. 51. (which Psalm he made, (as the Title hath it,) when Nathan the Propbet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba,) he mourns thus: Wash me thoroughly from mine Iniquity, and cleanse me from my Sin: For I acknowledge mine Iniquity, and my Sin is ever before me. Deliver me from Blood-guiltiness, O Lord: Thou desirest not Sacrifice, else would I give it: The Sacrifices of God are a broken Spirit; a broken and contrite Heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. I have the more largely spoken David's words, that you may thereby see how great his Grief was; how earnest his Prayers for pardon; and how deep an Anxiety had seized him, lest God's Favour should for ever have been withheld from him.*

Not was *St. Peter's Sin* without a remarkable Repentance. It is said, *Matth. 26. 75. Peter remembered the words of Jesus, who said unto him, Before the Cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice: And he went out, and WEPT BITTERLY.* It was not a light grief, and a Tear or two that were quickly dried up; but a Bitter Weeping; which words certainly do denote a very great and deep Sorrow.

Now those that think so well of their own Sins, from the thoughts of *David's* and *Peter's* Sins being so much greater than theirs; are they as ready to consider these good Mens Repentance? Do they grieve for their own, as these did for theirs? Is

the Burden of them heavy? Are they earnest in the begging pardon for them? If not, the greatness of some good Mens Sins in Holy Scripture, will be a mean Argument for the concluding their own not to be the Deformities of wicked Men.

I may truly say, that the great Sins of *David* and *Peter*, if considered with their Repentance, are much less than those Sins, which in themselves are not so great, without Repentance. And so, there is small reason for any Person, from the Failures of these Holy Men, to infer his own Spots to be none other than those of Gods Children.

Thirdly, There are more Ends than one, for which God hath caused those Sins of his Children to be registred in Sacred Story.

I cannot say but one End might be, that those who, in the like manner, have grievously fallen, may, through the Exercise of a like Repentance, have hope that they also shall not be refused. Thus *Rom. 15. 4. What things were written afore-time, were written for our Learning; that we through Comfort of the Scripture might have hope.*

But then, a no less End is this; viz.

That those who now live, and those who shall live in the Generations to come, may, from the Falls of others, take the more heed *that they fall not also.* And if they shall fall, they may well think, that their case is not so good; because they have had such warning before, and yet have not been prevail'd upon by it, for the being more careful.

And then yet further; *Another End*, altogether as great as the other Two, why the Sins of good Men have been recorded in Scripture, is this; to wit,

The shewing how God hates Sin even in those whom he loves; and how he will punish it, not only in their Persons while they live, but in their Names and Me-
mories

mories when they are *dead*, even to the End of the World.

Some other things, besides those that have been well pleasing unto God, (as *Mary's Ointment* was unto Christ,) *shall wheresoever the Gospel is Preach'd throughout the World, be spoken of also for a Memorial.* To make it known that *Sins* of a deep *Die* are in his *Children* altogether as *Odious* to his *Purity* and *Holiness*, as their *Pious Actions* are acceptable to his *Love* and *Goodness*.

And now, who is it that can have favourable Thoughts of Sin, when God hath put so many Examples in Holy Writ, as Warnings against Sin, on purpose that we should have the more care to avoid it? Who is it that may flatter himself in his Iniquities, who shall rightly consider, how God punisheth the Memory of his own Children, and setteth a Mark of Disgrace upon them, which shall last *till Heaven and Earth do pass away*?

He surely very slightly, or very partially, looks into the Bible, who from the Sins of Good Men there, can encourage himself in his own Sin; and think that its Pollution is small to Him, when it hath laid such a Blot upon their Names, as must not, as cannot, be rased out by any. Rather *let him Hear, and Fear*, and do himself, neither in the same, nor any other kind, so wickedly: As knowing, that though none need now to Fear that their Misdeeds shall be Registred in Books, which shall be of equal Authority with, and shall last as long as, the Bible, (for God therein hath wholly declared his Will; and so, Divine Writings are not further to be expected,) yet the All-powerful, and infinitely just Lord hath other ways of punishing them; and of manifesting the Pollution of their Sin, both to themselves and others, to be very great; how small soever they at present think it.

But Fourthly, *Theophilus*, we may truly affirm that God will not esteem the Sins of his Children, which are in themselves as great as, and the same with, the Sins of Others, to be therefore the less, because they are committed by those who are his Children.

That is, if any who are his, shall be unjust in their Actions; False in these Words, Intemperate, Unchast, or any other ways Vitious; their Injustice, Falseness, Intemperance, Unchastity, and whatever other Crimes they shall commit, shall be esteemed as carrying the same Pollution in them, which the same Sins in others do. For no Relation that a Man can stand in unto God, can make Injustice to become Righteousness; Falseness to become Truth; Intemperance Moderation; and Uncleaness Purity. And the Reason is; Because the Relation which they have unto God as Children, lieth chiefly in an *Internal Likeness* unto him; and a partaking of the Divine Nature in its Imitable Perfections. Now These consist in a Spiritual Remoteness from Sin, and an hatred of it; as being themselves contrary unto it. And therefore they can in no respect be thought to Extenuate, much less to cast a Beauty upon That, unto which they are so extreamly opposite.

Gods not beholding Iniquity in Jacob; and his not seeing perverseness in Israel, can never be rightly interpreted of their Sins being overlook'd, or not taken notice of by him, upon the mere account that they were his Children. For how grievously hath God complain'd of them? *I have seen* (saith he to Moses,) *this People, and behold it is a Stiff-Necked People; now therefore let me alone, that my Wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them; and I will make of Thee a great Nation.* And how often hath he threatned, and severely punish'd their Iniquities?

quities? Surely *Balaam himself* understood not Those his own Words, as These Men are too forward to do. For had he so done, why should he have Counsell'd *Balack*. That the *Israelites* by the *Midianitish Woman* should be allured to Trespas against the Lord, that thereby they might be *excluded from his Favour*.

Iniquity therefore in *Jacob*, and Perverseness in *Israel*, are not to be understood of *their own Sins*, against either God or Men; but of the *Iniquity and Perverseness of Others* against *Them*. Which thing the next Verse, but one, doth very well shew: Where the very same Preposition *in* (which the Margin retains,) with Relation to the very same Words, *Jacob, and Israel*, is rendred *against*. Surely there is no *Incantments (in) against Jacob; nor Divination (in) against Israel*, Numb. 23. 23.

And Gods *not Seeing*, and *not Beholding* denote his *not approving*, or *not enduring* it to be. So that the Sense of the Words is; not that he will not *see* Iniquity and Perverseness *in Them*, if they shall be Guilty; but that he will not *suffer* Iniquity and Perverseness *against Them*, if they shall be Innocent.

Nay, so far will the Relation of being Children unto God, be from less'ning the Pollution of any Heinous Sin, that it will be a very great Aggravation, and Heightning of it; and will render it the more displeasing unto Him.

That Those who have given up their Names unto Christ; who have seen the *Beauy of Holiness*; who have *tasted of the good Word* of God, and have been *washed and cleansed*, should commit Sin; *lose their first Love*; fall away; and *wallow in the Mire again*; how Odious in the Sight of God will it be! These, though they should be *the Signet on his Right Hand*, He, without their unfeigned Sorrow and Repentance,

would pluck them thence; as he spake of Coniah, *Jerem. 22. 24.* God is no Respector of Persons; But as in every Nation He that feareth Him, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted with him; so He that worketh Wickedness is rejected by him. As he is Judge of all the Earth, he will do right; and by no means will clear the Guilty.

He may sooner put off the Title of Father to such or such an One, than he can lay aside the Name of Holy and Just. His being a Father to any Man, is with Relation to his Obedience, which is mutable, and may be withheld: And if Obedience shall be wholly withheld, the Man ceaseth to be his Child; and God is no longer unto him a Father, in a Sense that betokeneth Love and Delight in him; But He who is most contrary unto God, putteth on that Relation: *Ye are of your Father the Devil;* saith our Saviour.

But then Holiness and Justice are Essential unto God; and cannot by any Condition or Carriage of Men be parted with. And so, by These, be Wickedness and Pollution in what Persons soever they will, He rightly will discern, and punish them.

God indeed is said to Love with an Everlasting Love; *Jer. 31. 3.* Which yet is not so to be understood, as if he were a fond Father, that could not spy the Faults of his Children; or would think them lighter or less than they are; but He is said to Love Everlastingly, in that he will never fail Those that Obedientially seek unto, and depend upon him; and will always afford sufficient means for their abiding in his Love; as well as, at the last, infinitely Reward them for Loving and Obeying him.

And He is pleased also to say, he Loveth with an Everlasting Love, in opposition to those Earthly Parents, who sometimes have no natural Affection, and so do not Love; and sometimes may want means and abilities

abilities to express their Love. Thus when my Father and Mother forsake me, (i. e. either for want of Will do not love me, or for want of Power cannot shew it as they would,) the Lord taketh me up.

But yet if his Child shall grow disobedient, requiring his Love with Presumption, and carrying it quite otherwise than a dutiful Child ought to do; Gods Eyes are open to the Faults of such his Son, and he will use his Rod of Correction towards him.

Yea, if his Son shall grow stubborn and disobedient; *Shall not hearken unto his Voice, but be a Drunkard or a Glutton, (as it is in Deut. 21. 20.) or any other way profane and dissolute, He will cast him off, and disinherit him; and it will not be the failing of his Love, but the Expression of his Justice and Holiness so to do.*

Agreeable hereunto is that of Ezekiel, Chap. 18. 24. *When the Righteous turneth away from his Righteousness, and committeth Iniquity, and doth according to all the Abominations which the wicked Man doth, shall he live? All his Righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; in the Trespasses that he hath trespassed, and in the Sin that he hath sinned shall he die. And in this his dealing, God appealeth to the House of Israel, if his way be not equal.*

And thus, *Theophilus*, I have considered the Sins of good Men in Holy Scripture, together with the ill Inferences which some Men are apt to make from them.

They look not upon them as the Sins of good Men, who take not the Repentance together with the Sins. And they are much mistaken, who think that those Sins are there mention'd only to shew how far God's Children may fall; and do not consider them rather as *Punishments* to their Names, who thus offended God; and as *greater Cautions* to us, that we, from their Falls, may stand the surer.

Yea,

Yea, They deal treacherously with themselves, who, from the Sins of God's Children in Holy Scripture, will flatter and encourage themselves in their own.

And they most grossly and dangerously err, who, (thinking that God will esteem the Sins of his Children, which are the same with those of others, to be less in them, merely because they bear the Name of his Children,) will strongly imagine themselves to be Gods Children, that so their Sins (though great they be, and are like never by true Repentance to be less,) may not be the Spots of wicked Men. These much wrong the Righteousness and Purity of God. These make Faith in Christ, *which worketh by Love*, to be the spurious Issue of their Fancy; and by thus untowardly thinking their Sins to be the Sins of *God's Children*, they the more surely make them the Sins of the *worst sort of wicked Men*.

Theoph. Your Discourse, *Eubulus*, hath been very satisfactory unto me. I yet could wish that some others had with me been partakers of it; because, I think, they thence might have learn'd to make a better Judgment of their Spiritual State, than now they seem to do.

Eubul. Would Men from such things as these, deal impartially with themselves, some dangerous Mistakes, which they are willing enough to foster, might be corrected.

And what, *Theophilus*, if they should seriously ask themselves these, or such like Questions? *viz.* Are we contented, and well enough pleas'd with our Original Sin, and the Imperfection of our Nature? Are we at no time affected with sorrow at it, as being our Sin? and do we never with a relenting Eye account it our Unhappiness, as being our Punishment? Can we sit idle under it, and not endeavour to correct it, by purging our Understandings of their Ignorance,

norance, our Wills of their Pravity, and our Affections of their Corruption? Doth the sense of it never encline us to Humility? And are we never thereby excited to pity others, who are thus polluted and unhappy as well as we? Or yet worse than so: Do we encrease the Defilements of our Nature, and studiously promote and stir up our vile Affections, which otherwise would have been more quiet?

And then for *Outward Actions*. Are our Lives almost wholly liv'd out in Sin? Can we proceed from one Wickedness to another; and do Evil with both Hands earnestly? Or else, if outward Shame hinder us from Evil Practices openly, and *in the Sight of this Sun*, do we Clandestinely Act them? Or is our behaviour Plausible and Civil, merely that we may the more surely, and with less Suspicion, carry on Evil Actions and Designs?

Or, if there be none of these outwardly notorious bad Actions, nor secretly Wicked Designs, yet are the chief Ends nothing look'd unto, in what we do? Is the Glory of God justled out by the Under-Aims of Earthly Profits or Pleasures? And doth the Salvation of our Souls, through Unbelief or Carelessness, weigh little or nothing with us, in respect of Advantage, or Reputation among Men?

Have the particular Obligations, by Almighty God laid upon us, not been minded, or not taken notice of by us to any good effect? Have our greater Knowledge and Abilities been improved to no higher Services, than the Ignorance and Weakness of the meaner Sort have been? Have the stronger Motions from Gods Holy Spirit fallen Fruitless upon us? And those Suggestions, which, at some times, we in a more than ordinary manner have had, and in which the Hand of God hath peculiarly been, have they been refused, and not complied with? In the Sins which we have committed, hath there been no
Unfained

Unfained Sorrow? No Indignation at ourselves for making such ill returns to so Gracious a God, and Father? Have our Devotions been none, or very Faint and Cold ones after our falling into Sin? Have our former Faults begot in us no Resolutions of not Sinning knowingly and Presumptuously for the time to come? Do we, when tempted to commit a Sin, not only yield to it, but continue in it? Are we never after it more earnest persuers of that which is Good? And do the Frailty and Weakness of our Natures, and the Sins, which, while we are in the Body, we shall never be free from, at no time prompt us to long for that Happy Day, when we in Heaven shall do Gods Will, without Carefulness, Drowsiness, and Imperfection? If, *Theophilus*, they should thus question themselves, and should find it no otherwise with them than what might be reducible to some or more of the particulars now mention'd, they might make a Judgment, whether their Sins are such, as belong to *the Worse*, or *less Evil* Sort of Wicked Men; but would have no reason to think them *only the Failures of Good Men*.

Theoph. Indeed, *Eubulus*, should Men thus be Judges of their own Misdeeds, they would not be more, than what they well might. Some of their Sins, possibly, which cannot so well bear the being look'd into, least their Pollution and Deformity should be discovered, might be apt to say, *ye take too much upon you; and who made you Rulers and Judges over us?* But certainly Men have a Power over their own Doings; and may search their own Hearts; and Examine the Rise, and Progress, and Design of their own Actings; and need not fear that any should say unto them, *Why do ye thus?*

Eubul. And this they may the rather do, *Theophilus*, because they are the better able, in many respects, to make a Judgment of their own Sins, than
other

other Men are. For they can see those things in their own Breasts, which are hid from Mens Eyes abroad : And, it may be, they can also conceive those deep Deceits there, which they cannot by their Words so well expresse, and give account of to others. Well, surely, it would be, that in those things, which they are unknown in unto Others, they should not be unknown to Themselves.

Theoph. It is, I confess, not the least part of Learning for Men to *know Themselves*. The being skill'd in the Works of Nature, and in the Arts and Sciences. The seeing into future Times; and *understanding all Mysteries, and all Knowledge*, would be of small avail with them, without the Knowledge of their own Sins. For where these are not known, there is very small hope that a Cure and Amendment will be wrought. And what would it profit a Man, to be otherwise, in all respects, accomplished, and yet to go out of the World with his Sins unknown, and so not repented of?

Eubul. I am persuaded, *Theophilus*, that the great reason of so many Mens continuing in their Sins, is because they are not willing to search into them. Let them be thoroughly look'd into, and the Cover taken off from their Deformity, and they will find few that will not loath them.

When *David* had considered his ways, *i. e.* had found the Spots and Defilements which his Sins carried in them, he *turned his Feet to Gods Testimonies*. He made haste and delayed not to keep his Commandments. And would Men generally do as He did, I have no cause to doubt, but, through Gods Blessing, there would be the same good Issue to *Them*, as to *Him* there was. Nay, I am sure, if Pollution and Deformity will Create a Loathing, they would perfectly Loath the Disobedience they have so long Indulged.

Theoph.

Theoph. Happy it would be, if Men, from the Motives of *Fear* or *Shame*, would cease to be Disobedient; but, surely, the Defilement and Deformity which Sin casteth upon them, should prevail with them most. And where they, from this Consideration chiefly, shall abstain from Iniquity, they will be, if I may so speak, the *more generously Innocent*.

Enbul. They, by so doing, will turn those Spots that mark'd them as wicked Men, into the Spots of *God's Children*. And, at the last, when their Bodies shall be raised *Spiritual and Incorruptible*, they will leave even these Spots also behind them. Ascending up into the *Heavenly Jerusalem*, where nothing shall in any wise enter that defileth; and where they will be for ever arrayed in *fine Linnen clean and white, the Righteousness of the Saints*.

To which *Heavenly Purity, Theophilus*, and *Inheritance Undeiled*, GOD, of his infinite Mercy, bring You, and Me, and Them, through the *Blood of Cleansing*; even that of our Lord and Saviour **JESUS CHRIST**.

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